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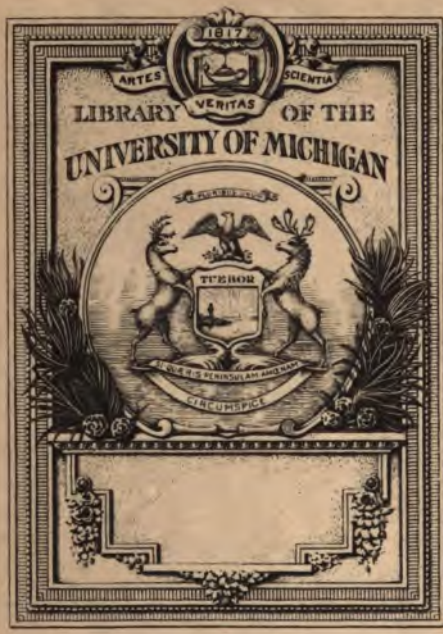
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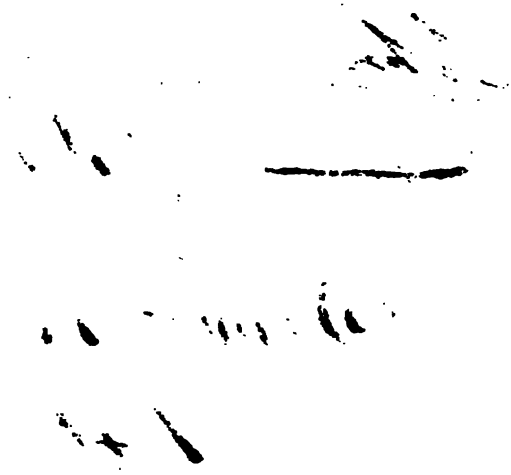

ELOISA:

OR,

A SERIES

OF

ORIGINAL LETTERS

COLLECTED AND PUBLISHED BY

Mr. J. J. ROUSSEAU,

CITIZEN OF GENEVA.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

A NEW EDITION:

TO WHICH IS NOW FIRST ADDED,

THE SEQUEL OF JULIA;

OR, *THE NEW ELOISA.*

(Found amongſt the Author's Papers after his Deceaſe.)

TOGETHER WITH A PORTRAIT OF MONS. ROUSSEAU.

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ELOISA.

LETTER LXXIV.

FROM LORD B—— TO ELOISA.

NOW, charming Eloiſa! we gain our point: a lucky miſtake of our friend hath brought him to reaſon. The ſhame of finding himſelf a moment in the wrong has diſſipated his phrenzy, and rendered him ſo tractable, that we may manage him for the future as we pleaſe. It is with pleaſure I ſee the fault he reproaches himſelf with attended rather with contrition than anger; and I know how highly he eſteems me, from that humility and confuſion he ſeems to feel when I am preſent, though under no embarraſſment or conſtraint. His ſenſibility of the injury he has done me diſarms my reſentment. When the offender thus acknowledges his crime, he reaps more honour by ſuch a reparation of his fault, than the offended in beſtowing him a pardon. I have taken the advantage of this change, and the effect it has produced, to enter into ſome neceſſary meaſures with him before my departure, which I now cannot defer much longer. As I propoſe t
the approaching ſummer, we have ag

he ſhould go wait for me at Paris, from whence we ſhall proceed together to England.

London is the moſt extenſive theatre in the world for the diſplay of great talents*. Thoſe of our friend are in many reſpects of the firſt rank; and I deſpair not of ſeeing him, with ſome little aſſiſtance, ſoon ſtrike out ſomething in his way to fortune, worthy of his merit. I will be more explicit as to my intentions when I ſee you; in the mean time, you will readily conceive the importance of his ſucceſs may encourage him to ſurmount many difficulties, and that there are various modes of diſtinction, which may compenſate for inferiority of birth, even in the opinion of your father. This appears to me the only expedient that remains to be tried, in order to effect your mutual happpineſs, ſince prejudice and fortune have deprived you of all others.

I have

* This it is to entertain unreaſonable prejudices in favour of one's own country. I have never heard of a people, among whom foreigners in general are ſo ill received, and find ſo many obſtacles to their advancement, as among the Engliſh. From the peculiar taſte of this nation, foreigners are encouraged in nothing; and by the form of government, they are excluded from all emoluments. We muſt agree in their favour, however, that an Engliſhman is never obliged to any perſon for that hoſpitality he churliſhly refuſes others. Where, except in London, is there to be ſeen any of thoſe inſolent iſlanders ſervilely cringing at court? In what country except their own do they ſeek to make their fortunes? They are churliſh, it is true, but their churliſhneſs does not diſpleaſe me, while it is conſiſtent with juſtice. I think it is very well they ſhould be

ning but *Engliſhmen*; ſince they have no occaſion to

I have written for Regianino to come poſt hither, and to remain with me during the eight or ten days I ſhall yet ſtay with our friend. He is too deeply afflicted to admit of much converſation: muſick will ſerve to fill up the vacant hours of ſilence, indulge his reveries, and ſooth his grief by degrees into a peaceful melancholy. I wait only to ſee him in ſuch a temper of mind, to leave him to himſelf; and before that I dare not truſt him. As for Regianino, I will leave him with you as I paſs by, and ſhall not take him from you again till I return from Italy; by which time, I imagine, from the progreſs you have already made, his aſſiſtance will be unneceſſary. Juſt at preſent he is certainly uſeleſs to Eloiſa, and I deprive her of nothing, by detaining him here for a few days.

LETTER LXXV.

TO CLARA.

AH! why do I live to open my eyes on my own unworthineſs! Oh! that I had for ever cloſed them, rather than thus to look on the diſgrace into which I am fallen; rather than to find myſelf the moſt abject, after having been the moſt fortunate of men! Generous and amiable friend! to whoſe care I have been ſo often obliged, ſtill let me pour my complaints into your compaſſionate heart; ſtill let me implore your aſſiſtance, ſenſible and aſhamed as I am of my own demerits: abandoned by myſelf, it is to you

I fly for conſolation. Heavens! how can it be that a man ſo contemptible ſhould ever be beloved by her; or that a paſſion for ſo divine an object ſhould not have refined my ſoul. Let her now bluſh at her choice, ſhe whoſe name I am no longer worthy to repeat. Let her ſigh to ſee her image profaned by dwelling in a heart ſo abject and mean. What hatred and diſdain doth ſhe not owe a wretch, that, inſpired by love, could yet be ſervile and baſe! You ſhall know, my charming couſin*, the cauſe of my diſgrace: you ſhall know my crime and penitence. Be you my judge, and let me periſh by your ſentence; or be my advocate, and let the adorable object on whom depended the paſt, conduct my future fortune.

I will ſay nothing of the effect which ſo unexpected a ſeparation had on me: I will ſay nothing of the exceſs of my grief, or the extravagance of my deſpair; you will judge of them too well from the unaccountable behaviour into which they betrayed me. The more ſenſible I grew of the miſery of my ſituation, the leſs I conceived it poſſible for me voluntarily to give up Eloiſa; and the bitterneſs of this reflexion, joined to the amazing generoſity of Lord B——, awaked ſuſpicions, on which I ſhall never reflect without horrour, and which I can never forget without ingratitude to the friend whoſe generoſity could forgive them.

Revolving

* In imitation of Eloiſa, he calls Clara his couſin, and Clara, after her example, likewiſe calls him her friend.

Revolving in my phrenzy the ſeveral circumſtances attending my departure, I imagined I diſcovered it to be a premeditated ſcheme, which I raſhly attributed to the moſt virtuous of mortals. That dreadful ſuſpicion no ſooner ſuggeſted itſelf than every circumſtance appeared to confirm it. My lord's converſation with the Baron d'Etange, and his peremptory manner, which I took to be affected, the quarrel which enſued, Eloiſa's being forbid to ſee me, and their reſolution to ſend me away, the diligence and ſecreſy of the preparations made for my departure, his lordſhip's diſcourſe with me the preceding evening; in ſhort, the rapidity with which I was rather forced than conducted hither—all theſe circumſtances ſeemed to prove that my lord had formed a ſcheme to ſeparate me from Eloiſa; and laſtly, his intended return aſſured me that I had diſcovered his deſigns. I reſolved, however, to get more particular information before I broke with him; and with this deſign ſet myſelf to examine the matter with attention. But every thing conſpired to increaſe my ridiculous ſuſpicions; all his generous and humane actions in my favour were converted by my jealouſy into ſo many inſtances of his perfidy. I knew that he wrote to Eloiſa from Beſançon, without communicating to me the contents of his letter, or giving me the leaſt hints. I thought myſelf, therefore, ſufficiently aſſured of the truth of what I ſuſpected, and waited only for his receiving an anſwer to his letter, which, I hoped, might be

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diſagreeable, to come to the explanation I meditated.

Laſt night we returned home pretty late, and I knew he had received a packet from Switzerland, of which however he took no notice when we retired. I let him have time to open it, and heard him from my apartment reading in a low voice: I liſtened attentively, and overheard him thus exclaim to himſelf, in broken ſentences: Alas, Eloiſa! I ſtrove to render you happy—I honoured your virtues—but I grieve at your deluſion—At theſe and other ſimilar exclamations, which I diſtinctly heard, I was no longer maſter of myſelf; I ſnatched up my ſword, and taking it under my arm, forced open the door, and ruſhed like a madman into his chamber; but I will not ſoil my paper, nor offend your delicacy, with the injurious expreſſions my rage dictated, to urge him to fight me on the ſpot.

Here, my dear couſin, I muſt confeſs to have ſeen the moſt extraordinary inſtance of the influence of true wiſdom, even over the moſt ſuſceptible mind, when we liſten to her dictates. At firſt he could not comprehend whence aroſe my diſorder, and took it for a real delirium. But the perfidy of which I accuſed him, the ſecret deſigns with which I reproached him, Eloiſa's letter, which he held in his hand, and which I inceſſantly mentioned, at length diſcovered the cauſe of my anger. He ſmiled, and ſaid to me coldly, "You are certainly out of your ſenſes; do you think me ſo void of diſcretion as to fight with

with a madman? Open your eyes, inconſiderate man (he ſaid) in a milder tone; is it poſſible you ſhould accuſe me of betraying you?" Something, I know not what, in his voice and manner of ſpeaking, ſtruck me immediately with a ſenſe of his innocence and my own folly. His reproof ſunk into my heart, and I had no ſooner met his looks than my ſuſpicions vaniſhed, and I began to think with horrour on the extravagance I had committed. He perceived immediately this change of ſentiment, and taking me by the hand, "'Tis well (ſaid he;) but if you had not recollected yourſelf before my juſtification, I would never have ſeen you more. As it is, and you have recovered your reaſon, read that letter, and know for once your friends." I would now have been excuſed from reading it, but the aſcendancy which ſo many advantages had given him over me, made him inſiſt on it with an air of authority; and, though my ſuſpicions were vaniſhed, I ſecretly wiſhed to ſee it.

Think what a ſituation I was in, on reading a letter that informed me of the unparalleled obligations I was under to a man I had ſo unworthily treated. I threw myſelf immediately at his feet, ſtruck with admiration, affliction, and ſhame: I embraced his knees with the utmoſt humiliation and concern, but could not utter a word. He received my penitence in the ſame manner as he did the outrage I had committed; and exacted no other recompenſe for the pardon he granted, than my promiſe that I

would never more oppoſe his deſigns to ſerve me. Yes, he ſhall act for the future as he pleaſes: his ſublime generoſity is more than human, and it is as impoſſible to refuſe his favours as it is to withſtand the benevolence of the Deity.

He gave afterwards two letters out of the packet, addreſſed to me, and which he would not deliver before he had read his own, that he might be made acquainted with the reſolution of your couſin. In peruſing them I found what a miſtreſs and friend heaven had beſtowed on me: I ſaw how it had connected me with the moſt perfect patterns of generoſity and virtue, to render my remorſe the more keen, and my meanneſs the more contemptible. Say, who is that matchleſs fair, whoſe beauty is her leaſt perfection; who, like the Divinity, makes herſelf equally adored for the diſpenſation of good and evil! It is Eloiſa; ſhe has undone me; yet, cruel as ſhe is, I love and admire her but the more. The more unhappy ſhe makes me, the more perfect ſhe appears; and every pain ſhe gives is a new inſtance of her perfection. The ſacrifice ſhe has made to *nature* both afflicts and charms me; it enhances even the value of that which ſhe made to *love*. No, my Eloiſa can make no refuſal that is not of equal value to what ſhe beſtows. And you, my charming, my truely deſerving couſin, the only perfect model of friendſhip your ſex can boaſt, an inſtance which minds not formed like your's will never believe real: tell not me of philo-

philoſophy; I deſpiſe its vain parade of idle terms; I deſpiſe that phantom of wiſdom which teaches us to brave the paſſions at a diſtance, but flies, and leaves us a prey to them, the moment they approach. Abandon me not, Clara, to a diſtracted mind; withdraw not your wonted kindneſs from a wretch, who, though he deſerves it no longer, deſires it more ardently, and ſtands more in need of it, than ever. Aſſiſt me to recover my former ſelf, and let your gentle council ſupply the dictates of reaſon to my afflicted heart.

I will yet hope I am not fallen into irretrievable diſgrace. I feel that pure and ſacred flame I once cheriſhed rekindle within me. The ſublime examples before me ſhall not be ſet in vain. The virtues which I love and admire I will imitate. Yes, divine Eloiſa! I will yet do honour to your choice; and you, my friends, whoſe eſteem I am determined to regain, my awakened ſoul ſhall gather new ſtrength and life from your's. Chaſte love and ſacred friendſhip ſhall reſtore that conſtancy of mind of which a cowardly deſpair had deprived me; the pure ſenſations of my heart ſhall ſupply the place of wiſdom: you ſhall make me every thing I ought to be, and I will compel you to forget my fall, in conſideration of my endeavours to riſe. I know not, neither do I deſire to know, the future lot which Providence aſſigns me: be it what it will, I will render myſelf worthy of that which I have already enjoyed. The image of Eloiſa, never

to be eraſed from my mind, ſhall be my ſhield, and render my ſoul invulnerable. I have lived long enough for my own happineſs, I will now live to her honour. Oh! that I could but live ſo ſupremely virtuous, that the admiring world ſhould ſay, how could he do leſs who was loved by Eloiſa!

P. S.—From ties abhorred *and perhaps inevitable!* — What is the meaning of thoſe words? they are in Eloiſa's letter. Clara, I am attentive to every, the minuteſt circumſtance. I am reſigned to fortune: but thoſe words—whatever may happen, I will never leave this place till I have an explanation of thoſe words.

LETTER LXXVI.

FROM ELOISA.

CAN it be that my ſoul has not excluded all delight, and that a ſenſe of joy yet penetrates my heart? Alas! I conceived it inſenſible to any thing but ſorrow: I thought I ſhould do nothing but ſuffer, when you left me, and that abſence had no conſolations: your letter to my couſin has undeceived me; I have read and bathed it with tears of compaſſion. It has ſhed a ſweet refreſhing dew over a drooping heart, dried up with vexation and ſorrow. The peaceful ſerenity it has cauſed in my ſoul convinces me of the aſcendant you hold, whether preſent

or

or abſent, over the affections of Eloiſa. Oh! my friend, how much it delights me too ſee you recover that ſtrength of mind which becomes the reſolution of a man! I eſteem you for it the more, and deſpiſe myſelf the leſs, in that the dignity of a chaſte affection is not totally debaſed between us, and that our hearts are not both at once corrupted. I will ſay more, as we can at preſent ſpeak freely of our affairs. That which moſt aggravated my deſpair was, to ſee that your's deprived us of the only reſource we had left, the exertion of your abilities to improve them. You now know the worth of the friendſhip with which heaven has bleſſed you, in that of my Lord B——, whoſe generoſity merits the ſervices of your whole life, nor can you ever ſufficiently atone for the offenſe you have committed. I hope you will need no other warning to make you guard for the future againſt your impetuous paſſions. It is under the protection of this honourable friend that you are going to enter on the ſtage of the world; it is under the ſanction of his credit, under the guidance of his experience, that you go to revenge the cauſe of injured merit on the cruelty of fortune.

Do that for his ſake which you did not for your own. Endeavour at leaſt to reſpect his goodneſs, by not rendering it uſeleſs to yourſelf. Behold a pleaſing proſpect ſtill before you: contemplate the ſucceſs you have reaſon to hope for in entering the liſts where every thing conſpires to enſure the victory. Heaven has been laviſh to

you of its bounties; your natural genius, cultivated by taſte, has endowed you with every neceſſary and agreeable qualification? at leaſt, at four-and-twenty you poſſeſs all the charms of youth, matured by the reflexion of age.

Frutto ſenile in ſu'l giovenil fiore.

The fruit of age amidſt the bloom of youth.

Study has not impaired your vivacity, nor injured your perſon; inſipid gallantry has not contracted your genius, nor formality your underſtanding: but love, inſpiring thoſe ſublime ſentiments which are its genuine offspring, hath given you that elevation of mind and juſtneſs of conception from which it is inſeparable*. I have ſeen your mind, expanded by its gentle warmth, diſplay its brilliant faculties, as a flower that unfolds itſelf to the rays of the ſun: you poſſeſs at once every talent that leads to fortune, and ſhould ſet you above it: you need only aſpire to be conſiderable, to become ſo; and I hope that object, for whoſe ſake you ſhould covet diſtinction, will excite in you a greater zeal for thoſe marks of the world's eſteem, than of themſelves they may deſerve.

You are going, my friend, far from me—my beſt beloved is going to fly from his Eloiſa.—It muſt be ſo—It is neceſſary that we ſhould part at preſent, if we mean ever to be happy: on the ſucceſs of your undertakings alſo depends our laſt hope of ſuch an event—Oh! may the anticipation of it animate and comfort you during our

* Simple Eloiſa! you give no proof here of your's.

our cruel, perhaps long ſeparation! may it inſpire you with that zeal which ſurmounts every obſtacle! The world and its affairs will, indeed, continually engage your attention, and relieve you from the pangs of abſence. But I, alas! remain alone, abandoned to my own thoughts, or ſubject to the perſecution of others, that will oblige me inceſſantly to lament your abſence. Happy, however, ſhall I be, in ſome meaſure, if groundleſs alarms do not aggravate my real afflictions; and if the evils I actually ſuffer be not augmented by thoſe to which you may be expoſed.——I ſhudder at the thoughts of the various dangers to which your life and innocence will be liable. I place in you all the confidence a man can expect; but, ſince it is our lot to live aſunder, O my friend, I could wiſh you were ſomething more than man. Will you not ſtand in need of frequent advice to regulate your conduct in a world to which you are ſo much a ſtranger? It does not belong to me, young and unexperienced, and even leſs qualified by reflexion and ſtudy than yourſelf, to adviſe you here. That difficult taſk I leave to Lord B——. I will content myſelf to recommend to you two things, as theſe depend more on ſentiment than experience; and, though I know but little of the world, I flatter myſelf I am not to be inſtructed in the knowledge of your heart: *Be virtuous, and remember Eloiſa!*

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Excuſe this rhapſody, my dear friend; you know it is originally derived from you, and it is due to the paſſion that inſpired it. I do not take upon me to inſtruct you, by repeating your own maxims, but endeavour to enforce their application to yourſelf. Now is the time to put in practice your own precepts, and to ſhow how well you can act what you ſo well know how to teach. Though it is not expected you ſhould be put to the tryals of a Cato or a Regulus,

diſagreeable, to come to the explanation I meditated.

Laſt night we returned home pretty late, and I knew he had received a packet from Switzerland, of which however he took no notice when we retired. I let him have time to open it, and heard him from my apartment reading in a low voice: I liſtened attentively, and overheard him thus exclaim to himſelf, in broken ſentences: Alas, Eloiſa! I ſtrove to render you happy—I honoured your virtues—but I grieve at your deluſion—At theſe and other ſimilar exclamations, which I diſtinctly heard, I was no longer maſter of myſelf; I ſnatched up my ſword, and taking it under my arm, forced open the door, and ruſhed like a madman into his chamber; but I will not ſoil my paper, nor offend your delicacy, with the injurious expreſſions my rage dictated, to urge him to fight me on the ſpot.

Here, my dear couſin, I muſt confeſs to have ſeen the moſt extraordinary inſtance of the influence of true wiſdom, even over the moſt ſuſceptible mind, when we liſten to her dictates. At firſt he could not comprehend whence aroſe my diſorder, and took it for a real delirium. But the perfidy of which I accuſed him, the ſecret deſigns with which I reproached him, Eloiſa's letter, which he held in his hand, and which I inceſſantly mentioned, at length diſcovered the cauſe of my anger. He ſmiled, and ſaid to me coldly, "You are certainly out of your ſenſes; do *you think me* ſo void of diſcretion as to fight with

with a madman? Open your eyes, inconſiderate man (he ſaid) in a milder tone; is it poſſible you ſhould accuſe me of betraying you?" Something, I know not what, in his voice and manner of ſpeaking, ſtruck me immediately with a ſenſe of his innocence and my own folly. His reproof ſunk into my heart, and I had no ſooner met his looks than my ſuſpicions vaniſhed, and I began to think with horrour on the extravagance I had committed. He perceived immediately this change of ſentiment, and taking me by the hand, "'Tis well (ſaid he;) but if you had not recollected yourſelf before my juſtification, I would never have ſeen you more. As it is, and you have recovered your reaſon, read that letter, and know for once your friends." I would now have been excuſed from reading it, but the aſcendancy which ſo many advantages had given him over me, made him inſiſt on it with an air of authority; and, though my ſuſpicions were vaniſhed, I ſecretly wiſhed to ſee it.

Think what a ſituation I was in, on reading a letter that informed me of the unparalleled obligations I was under to a man I had ſo unworthily treated. I threw myſelf immediately at his feet, ſtruck with admiration, affliction, and ſhame: I embraced his knees with the utmoſt humiliation and concern, but could not utter a word. He received my penitence in the ſame manner as he did the outrage I had committed; and exacted no other recompenſe for the pardon he granted, than my promiſe that I

would never more oppoſe his deſigns to ſerve me. Yes, he ſhall act for the future as he pleaſes: his ſublime generoſity is more than human, and it is as impoſſible to refuſe his favours as it is to withſtand the benevolence of the Deity.

He gave afterwards two letters out of the packet, addreſſed to me, and which he would not deliver before he had read his own, that he might be made acquainted with the reſolution of your couſin. In peruſing them I found what a miſtreſs and friend heaven had beſtowed on me: I ſaw how it had connected me with the moſt perfect patterns of generoſity and virtue, to render my remorſe the more keen, and my meanneſs the more contemptible. Say, who is that matchleſs fair, whoſe beauty is her leaſt perfection; who, like the Divinity, makes herſelf equally adored for the diſpenſation of good and evil! It is Eloiſa; ſhe has undone me; yet, cruel as ſhe is, I love and admire her but the more. The more unhappy ſhe makes me, the more perfect ſhe appears; and every pain ſhe gives is a new inſtance of her perfection. The ſacrifice ſhe has made to *nature* both afflicts and charms me; it enhances even the value of that which ſhe made to *love*. No, my Eloiſa can make no refuſal that is not of equal value to what ſhe beſtows. And you, my charming, my truely deſerving couſin, the only perfect model of friendſhip your ſex can boaſt, an inſtance which minds not formed like *your's will never* believe real: tell not me of philo-

philoſophy; I deſpiſe its vain parade of idle terms; I deſpiſe that phantom of wiſdom which teaches us to brave the paſſions at a diſtance, but flies, and leaves us a prey to them, the moment they approach. Abandon me not, Clara, to a diſtracted mind; withdraw not your wonted kindneſs from a wretch, who, though he deſerves it no longer, deſires it more ardently, and ſtands more in need of it, than ever. Aſſiſt me to recover my former ſelf, and let your gentle council ſupply the dictates of reaſon to my afflicted heart.

I will yet hope I am not fallen into irretrievable diſgrace. I feel that pure and ſacred flame I once cheriſhed rekindle within me. The ſublime examples before me ſhall not be ſet in vain. The virtues which I love and admire I will imitate. Yes, divine Eloiſa! I will yet do honour to your choice; and you, my friends, whoſe eſteem I am determined to regain, my awakened ſoul ſhall gather new ſtrength and life from your's. Chaſte love and ſacred friendſhip ſhall reſtore that conſtancy of mind of which a cowardly deſpair had deprived me; the pure ſenſations of my heart ſhall ſupply the place of wiſdom: you ſhall make me every thing I ought to be, and I will compel you to forget my fall, in conſideration of my endeavours to riſe. I know not, neither do I deſire to know, the future lot which Providence aſſigns me: be it what it will, I will render myſelf worthy of that which I have already enjoyed. The image of Eloiſa, never to

to be eraſed from my mind, ſhall be my ſhield, and render my ſoul invulnerable. I have lived long enough for my own happineſs, I will now live to her honour. Oh! that I could but live ſo ſupremely virtuous, that the admiring world ſhould ſay, how could he do leſs who was loved by Eloiſa!

P. S.—From ties abhorred *and perhaps inevitable!* —What is the meaning of thoſe words? they are in Eloiſa's letter. Clara, I am attentive to every, the minuteſt circumſtance. I am reſigned to fortune: but thoſe words—whatever may happen, I will never leave this place till I have an explanation of thoſe words.

LETTER LXXVI.

FROM ELOISA.

CAN it be that my ſoul has not excluded all delight, and that a ſenſe of joy yet penetrates my heart? Alas! I conceived it inſenſible to any thing but ſorrow: I thought I ſhould do nothing but ſuffer, when you left me, and that abſence had no conſolations: your letter to my couſin has undeceived me; I have read and bathed it with tears of compaſſion. It has ſhed a ſweet refreſhing dew over a drooping heart, dried up with vexation and ſorrow. The peaceful ſerenity it has cauſed in my ſoul convinces me of the aſcendant you hold, whether preſent

or abſent, over the affections of Eloiſa. Oh! my friend, how much it delights me too ſee you recover that ſtrength of mind which becomes the reſolution of a man! I eſteem you for it the more, and deſpiſe myſelf the leſs, in that the dignity of a chaſte affection is not totally debaſed between us, and that our hearts are not both at once corrupted. I will ſay more, as we can at preſent ſpeak freely of our affairs. That which moſt aggravated my deſpair was, to ſee that your's deprived us of the only reſource we had left, the exertion of your abilities to improve them. You now know the worth of the friendſhip with which heaven has bleſſed you, in that of my Lord B——, whoſe generoſity merits the ſervices of your whole life, nor can you ever ſufficiently atone for the offenſe you have committed. I hope you will need no other warning to make you guard for the future againſt your impetuous paſſions. It is under the protection of this honourable friend that you are going to enter on the ſtage of the world; it is under the ſanction of his credit, under the guidance of his experience, that you go to revenge the cauſe of injured merit on the cruelty of fortune.

Do that for his ſake which you did not for your own. Endeavour at leaſt to reſpect his goodneſs, by not rendering it uſeleſs to yourſelf. Behold a pleaſing proſpect ſtill before you: contemplate the ſucceſs you have reaſon to hope for in entering the liſts where every thing conſpires to enſure the victory. Heaven has been laviſh to

you of its bounties; your natural genius, cultivated by taſte, has endowed you with every neceſſary and agreeable qualification? at leaſt, at four-and-twenty you poſſeſs all the charms of youth, matured by the reflexion of age.

Frutto ſenile in ſu'l giovenil fiore.
The fruit of age amidſt the bloom of youth.

Study has not impaired your vivacity, nor injured your perſon; inſipid gallantry has not contracted your genius, nor formality your underſtanding: but love, inſpiring thoſe ſublime ſentiments which are its genuine offspring, hath given you that elevation of mind and juſtneſs of conception from which it is inſeparable*. I have ſeen your mind, expanded by its gentle warmth, diſplay its brilliant faculties, as a flower that unfolds itſelf to the rays of the ſun: you poſſeſs at once every talent that leads to fortune, and ſhould ſet you above it: you need only aſpire to be conſiderable, to become ſo; and I hope that object, for whoſe ſake you ſhould covet diſtinction, will excite in you a greater zeal for thoſe marks of the world's eſteem, than of themſelves they may deſerve.

You are going, my friend, far from me—my beſt beloved is going to fly from his Eloiſa.—It muſt be ſo—It is neceſſary that we ſhould part at preſent, if we mean ever to be happy: on the ſucceſs of your undertakings alſo depends our laſt hope of ſuch an event—Oh! may the anticipation of it animate and comfort you during our

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our cruel, perhaps long ſeparation! may it inſpire you with that zeal which ſurmounts every obſtacle! The world and its affairs will, indeed, continually engage your attention, and relieve you from the pangs of abſence. But I, alas! remain alone, abandoned to my own thoughts, or ſubject to the perſecution of others, that will oblige me inceſſantly to lament your abſence. Happy, however, ſhall I be, in ſome meaſure, if groundleſs alarms do not aggravate my real afflictions; and if the evils I actually ſuffer be not augmented by thoſe to which you may be expoſed.——I ſhudder at the thoughts of the various dangers to which your life and innocence will be liable. I place in you all the confidence a man can expect; but, ſince it is our lot to live aſunder, O my friend, I could wiſh you were ſomething more than man. Will you not ſtand in need of frequent advice to regulate your conduct in a world to which you are ſo much a ſtranger? It does not belong to me, young and unexperienced, and even leſs qualified by reflexion and ſtudy than yourſelf, to adviſe you here. That difficult taſk I leave to Lord B——. I will content myſelf to recommend to you two things, as theſe depend more on ſentiment than experience; and, though I know but little of the world, I flatter myſelf I am not to be inſtructed in the knowledge of your heart: *Be virtuous, and remember Eloiſa!*

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yet every man ought to cheriſh a love for his country, reſolution, and integrity, and to keep his promiſe inviolable, even at the expenſe of his life. Private virtues are often the more ſublime, as they leſs aſpire to publick approbation, but have their end in the teſtimony of a good conſcience, which gives the virtuous a more ſolid ſatisfaction than the loudeſt applauſes of the multitude. Hence you may ſee true greatneſs is confined to no one ſtation of life, and that no man can be happy who is not the object of his own eſteem; for, if the height of ſelf-enjoyment conſiſts in the contemplation of the truley beautiful, how can the vicious man admire the beauty of virtue in others, and not be forced to deſpiſe himſelf? I am not apprehenſive of your being corrupted by ſenſual pleaſures; a heart ſo refined as your's will be in little danger from the groſs ſeductions of appetite. But there are others more dangerous and ſentimental. I dread the effects of the maxims and leſſons of the world: I dread the force of vicious examples, ſo conſtantly preſent, and ſo generally prevalent: I dread thoſe ſubtle ſophiſms by which vice is excuſed and defended: I dread, in ſhort, leſt your heart ſhould impoſe upon itſelf, and render you leſs difficult about the means of acquiring importance, than you would be if our union were not to be the conſequence. I only caution you, my friend, againſt the danger; your own diſcretion muſt do the reſt: a foreſight of accidental evils, however, is no ſmall ſtep towards

their

their prevention. I will add but one reflexion more, which, in my opinion, diſproves the falſe arguments of vice, expoſes the miſtaken conceits of folly, and ought alone to direct a wiſe man to purſue his ſovereign good. This is, that the ſource of true happineſs is not confined to the deſired object, nor to the heart which poſſeſſes it, but conſiſts in a certain relation between the one and the other: that every object of our deſires will not produce the happineſs ſought in its poſſeſſion, nor is the heart at all times in a diſpoſition to receive it. If the utmoſt refinement of intellectual pleaſure is not ſufficient alone to conſtitute our felicity, ſurely all the voluptuous pleaſures on earth cannot make the depraved man happy. There is on both ſides a neceſſary preparative, a certain combination of cauſes, from which reſult that delightful ſenſation ſo earneſtly ſought after by every ſenſible being, and for ever unexperienced by the pretended philoſopher, who coldly nips his pleaſures in the bud, for want of knowing how to foſter them with that genial warmth which would ripen them into perfect felicity. What helps it, then, to obtain one advantage at the expenſe of another? to gain *without* what we loſe *within?* to procure the means of happineſs, and loſe the art of employing them? Is it not better alſo, if we can enjoy but one of theſe advantages, to ſacrifice what the power of fortune may reſtore, to that which once loſt can never be recovered? None ſhould know better than I, who have em-

bittered

bittered all the ſweets of my life, by thinking to increaſe them. Let the vicious and profligate, then, who diſplay their good fortune, but keep their hearts a ſecret, let them advance what they will; be aſſured that if there be one inſtance of happineſs upon earth, it muſt be found in the breaſt of the virtuous. Heaven hath beſtowed on you an happy inclination for what is virtuous and good: liſten then only to your own deſires, follow only your own inclinations, and think above all on the growth of our infant affections. So long as the rememberance of thoſe delightful moments of innocence ſhall remain, it will be impoſſible that you ſhould ceaſe to love that which rendered them ſo endearing; it will be impoſſible the charms of moral excellence ſhould ever be effaced from your mind, or that you ſhould wiſh to obtain Eloiſa by means unworthy of yourſelf. Can any one enjoy a pleaſure for which he has loſt the taſte? No; to be able to poſſeſs what one loves, it is neceſſary the heart that loved it ſhould be ſtill the ſame.

I am come now to my ſecond point: you ſee I have not forgot my logick: it is poſſible, my friend, without love to have the ſublime ſentiments of a great mind; but a love like our's ſupplies its flame, which being once extinguiſhed the ſoul becomes languid, and a heart once exhauſted is good for nothing. Tell me, what ſhould we be if we ceaſed to love? Is it not better to loſe our exiſtence than our ſenſibility? or could you reſolve to endure the life of an ordinary

dinary being, after having taſted every delight that can raviſh the heart of man? You are going to viſit populous cities, where your age and figure, rather than your merit, will lay a thouſand ſnares for your fidelity. Inſinuating coquetry will affect the language of tenderneſs, and pleaſe without deceiving you. You will not ſeek love, but enjoyment; you will taſte it without love, and not know it for the ſame pleaſure. I know not whether you will find in another the heart of Eloiſa; but of this I am certain, you will never experience with another thoſe ecſtaſies you have taſted with her. The vacancy of your exhauſted mind will effect the deſtiny I predict. Sadneſs and care will overwhelm you in the midſt of frivolous amuſements. The remembrance of our firſt tranſports will purſue you in ſpite of yourſelf; my image, an hundred times more beautiful than I ever was, will overtake you. In a moment the veil of diſguſt will be thrown over all your delights, and a thouſand bitter reflexions ruſh into your mind. My beſt beloved, my amiable friend! Oh! ſhould you ever forget me!———Alas! I can but die; but you, you will live baſe and unhappy, and my death will be but too ſeverely revenged.

Forget not then your Eloiſa, who lives for you, and whoſe heart can never be another's. I can ſay nothing more regarding that dependence in which Providence hath placed me: but, after having recommended fidelity to you, it is but juſt to give you the only pledge of mine that is

in my power. I have conſulted, not my duty, my diſtracted mind knows that no longer, but I have examined my heart, the laſt guide of thoſe who can follow no other; and behold the reſult of its examination—I am determined never to be your wife without the conſent of my father, but I will never marry another without your conſent; of this I give you my word, which, whatever happens, I will keep ſacred; nor is there a power on earth can make me break my promiſe. Be not, therefore, diſquieted at what may befal me in your abſence. Go, my dear friend, purſue, under the auſpices of the moſt tender love, a deſtiny worthy to crown your merit: mine is in your hands, as much as it is in my power to commit it, and never ſhall it be altered but with your conſent.

LETTER LXXVII.

TO ELOISA.

O qual fiamma di gloria, d' onore,
Scorrer ſento per tutte le vene
Alma grande parlando con te!

By nobleſt ſentiments inſpired,
How pants my heart for virtuous fame!
While as you ſpeak, to glory fired,
I feel my boſom all on flame.

O ELOISA, let me breathe a moment—you make me ſhudder, my blood boils, my heart pants; your letter glows with that ſacred love of virtue which fires your breaſt, and communicates

municates its celeſtial flame to the inmoſt receſſes of mine. But why ſo many exhortations, where you ſhould have laid on me your commands? Do you think I can ſo far forget myſelf as to want arguments to excite me to act juſtly? at leaſt, can I want to have them urged by you, whoſe injunctions alone I ſhould fly to obey? Can you be ignorant that I ever will be what you pleaſe to have me? and that I could even act unjuſtly before I could diſobey you? Yes, I could ſet another capitol in flames if you enjoined me, for nothing can be ſo dear to me as you are. But, do you know, my incomparable Eloiſa, why you are thus dear? It is becauſe you can deſire nothing but what is virtuous, and that my admiration of your virtues exceeds even the love inſpired by your charms. I go, encouraged by the engagement into which you have entered, the latter part of which, however, you might have omitted; for to promiſe not to be another's without my conſent, is it not to promiſe to be none but mine? For my own part, I ſpeak more freely, and pledge with you the faith of a man of honour, ever to remain ſacred and inviolable: I am ignorant to what deſtiny fortune will lead me in the career I am going, for your ſatisfaction, to enter upon; but never ſhall the ties of love or marriage unite me to any other than Eloiſa d'Etange. I live, I exiſt, but for her, and ſhall either die married to her, or not married at all.—Adieu! I am preſſed for time, and am going to depart this inſtant.

LETTER

LETTER LXXVIII.

TO ELOISA.

I Arrived laſt night at Paris, and he who once could not live two ſtreets length removed from you is now at the diſtance of more than an hundred leagues. Pity, Eloiſa, pity your unhappy friend: had the blood guſhing from my veins dyed with its ſtreams my long, long route, my ſpirits could not have failed me more; I could not have found myſelf more languid than at preſent. Oh! that I knew as well when we ſhall meet again, as I know the diſtance that divides us! The progreſs of time ſhould then compenſate for the length of ſpace. I would count every day, every hour of my life, my ſteps towards Eloiſa. But that diſmal career is hid in the gloom of futurity; its bounds are concealed from my feeble ſight. How painful, how terrible is ſuſpenſe! my reſtleſs heart is ever ſeeking, but finds you not. The ſun riſes, but gives me no hopes of ſeeing you; it ſets without granting me that bleſſing. My days are void of pleaſure, and paſs away as one long continued night. In vain I endeavour to rekindle my extinguiſhed hopes, they offer me nothing but uncertainty and groundleſs conſolations. Alas! my gentle friend! what evils have I not to expect if they are to be a counterpoiſe to my paſt happineſs!

But, I conjure you, let not my complaints alarm you; they are only the curſory effects of ſolitude,

ſolitude, and the diſagreeable reflexions of my journey. Fear not the return of my former weakneſs; my heart is in your hands, Eloiſa, and while you are its ſupport it cannot debaſe itſelf. One of the comfortable fruits of your laſt letter is, that ſince I find myſelf ſuſtained by a double ſhare of ſpirits; and though love ſhould annihilate what is properly mine, I ſhould ſtill be a gainer; the reſolution with which you have inſpired me being able to ſupport me better than I could otherwiſe have ſupported myſelf. I am convinced it was not good for man to be alone. Human minds muſt be united to exert their greateſt ſtrength; and the united force of friendly ſouls, like that of the collateral bars of an artificial magnet, is comparatively greater than the ſum of their ſeparate forces. This is thy triumph, celeſtial friendſhip! but what is even friendſhip itſelf, compared to that perfect union of ſouls which connects the moſt perfect, the moſt harmonious amity, with ties an hundred times more ſacred? Where are the men whoſe ideas, groſs as their appetites, repreſent the paſſion of love only as a fever in the blood, the effect of brutal inſtinct? Let them come to me, let them obſerve, let them feel what paſſes in my breaſt; let them view an unhappy lover ſeparated from his beloved object, doubtful whether he ſhall ever ſee her more, and hopeleſs of retrieving his loſt happineſs; animated, however, by the never-dying flame, which, kindled by your beauties, has been nouriſhed by your

mental charms, they will ſee him ready to brave the rigours of adverſity; to be deprived even of your lovely ſelf, and to cheriſh all thoſe virtues that you have inſpired, and which embelliſh that adorable image that ſhall never be eraſed from my ſoul. Oh! my Eloiſa, what ſhould I be without you? Informed, indeed, by diſpaſſionate reaſon, a cold admirer of virtue, I might have reſpected it in any one. I ſhall now do more: I ſhall now be enabled to put it zealouſly in practice; and, penetrated by your example, ſhall excite thoſe who have known us to exclaim—"What happy creatures ſhould we be, if all the women in the world were Eloiſas, and all the men had hearts ſuſceptible of their charms!"

As I was meditating during my journey on your laſt letter, I formed a reſolution of collecting together all thoſe you have written to me, as I no longer can attend to your delightful counſel from your own mouth. For, though there is not one which I have not learnt by heart, I love to read them continually, and to contemplate the characters of that lovely hand which alone can make me happy: but the paper wears out by degrees, and therefore, before they fall quite in pieces, I deſign to copy each letter in a book, which I have already prepared for that purpoſe. It is pretty large, but I provide for the time to come, and even hope to live long enough to fill more than one volume. I ſet apart my evenings for this delightful employment, and proceed

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but ſlowly, in order to prolong ſo agreeable a taſk. This inceſtimable volume I will never part with; it ſhall be the manual of my devotions, my companion through the world which I am going to enter; it ſhall be my antidote againſt the pernicious maxims of ſociety; it ſhall comfort me under my afflictions; it ſhall prevent or amend my errours; it ſhall afford me inſtruction in my youth, and yield me edification in age: the firſt love-letters, Eloiſa, that perhaps ever were put to ſuch an uſe! With reſpect to your laſt epiſtle which I have before me, excellent as it appears to me, I find however one thing you ſhould have omitted. You may think it ſtrange; but it is much more ſo that this very article ſhould particularly regard yourſelf, and that I blame you even for writing it at all. Why do you talk to me of fidelity and conſtancy? you once were better acquainted both with my paſſion and your own power. Ah! Eloiſa, do you entertain ſuch changeable ſentiments? what, though I had promiſed you nothing, ſhould I the ſooner ceaſe to be your's? Oh! no, it was at the firſt glance you directed to me, at the firſt word you ſpoke, at the firſt motion of my heart, that a flame was kindled in my ſoul which can never be extinguiſhed. Had I never ſeen you ſince that firſt moment, it had been enough, it had been afterwards too late to have ever forgotten you. And is it poſſible for me to forget you now? now that, intoxicated with my paſt felicity, the very rememberance of it makes me ſtill happy? now,

that the ſoul which once animated me is fled, and I live only by that which Eloiſa hath inſpired? now, that I deſpiſe myſelf for expreſſing ſo coldly what I ſo ſenſibly feel? ſhould all the beauties in the univerſe diſplay their charms to ſeduce me, is there one amongſt them could eclipſe thine? Let them all combine to captivate my heart; let them pierce, let them wound it, let them break to pieces this faithful mirror of my Eloiſa, her unſullied image will not ceaſe to be reflected from its ſmalleſt fragments, for nothing is able to drive it thence. No, not Omnipotence itſelf can go thus far; it may annihilate my ſoul, but cannotpermit its exiſtence and make it ceaſe to love Eloiſa.

Lord B—— has undertaken to give you an account of my affairs, and what he has projected in my favour: but I am afraid he will not ſtrictly fulfil his promiſe with reſpect to his preſent plan. For you are to know that he has abuſed the right his beneficence has given him over me, in extending it beyond the bounds of generoſity. The penſion he has ſettled on me, and by which he has made me independent, has put me in a condition to make an appearance here much above my rank, and perhaps even that which I ſhall have occaſion to make in London. While I am here, as I have nothing to do, I live juſt as I pleaſe, and ſhall have no temptation to throw away the ſavings of my income in idle expenſes. You, Eloiſa, have taught me that our principal, at leaſt our moſt preſſing wants, are thoſe of a benevolent

benevolent mind; and as long as one individual is deprived of the neceſſaries of life, what virtuous man will riot in its ſuperfluities?

LETTER LXXIX.

TO ELOISA.

*I Enter with a ſecret horrour on this vaſt deſert, the world; whoſe confuſed proſpect appears to me only as a frightful ſcene of ſolitude and ſilence. In vain my ſoul endeavours to ſhake off the univerſal reſtraint it lies under. It was the ſaying of a celebrated ancient, that he was never leſs alone than when by himſelf: for my

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* Without anticipating the judgement which the reader, or Eloiſa, may paſs on the following narratives, it may not be improper to obſerve, that, if I had written them myſelf, though I might not have made them better, I ſhould have done it in a different manner. I was ſeveral times going to cancel them, and ſubſtitute others written in my own way in their place; but I have at length ventured to inſert them as they are. I bethought myſelf, that a young man of four-and-twenty ought not to ſee things in the ſame light as a man of fifty, whom experience had too well inſtructed to place them in a proper point of view. I reflected, alſo, that without having played any great part in life, I was not, however, in a ſituation to ſpeak with abſolute impartiality. Let theſe letters paſs then as they were originally written. The common-place remarks, or trivial obſervations that may be found in them, are but ſmall faults, and will import little. But it is of the greateſt importance to a lover of truth, that to the end of his life his paſſions ſhould never affect the impartiality of his writings.—The above note is omitted by the author in his laſt corrected edition of this work.

my part, I am never alone but when I mix with the crowd, and am neither with you nor with any-body elſe. My heart would ſpeak, but it feels there is none to hear: it is ready to anſwer, but no one ſays any thing that regards it. I underſtand not the language of the country, and no-body here underſtands mine. Yet, I own that I am greatly careſſed, and that all the obliging offices of friendſhip and civility are readily offered to me: this is the very thing of which I complain. The officious zeal of thouſands is ever on the wing to oblige me, but I know not how to entertain immediately a friendſhip for men I have never ſeen before. The honeſt feelings of humanity, the plain and affecting openneſs of a frank heart, are expreſſed in a different manner from thoſe falſe appearances of politeneſs, and that external flattery, which the cuſtoms of the world require. I am not a little afraid that he, who treats me at firſt ſight as if I was a friend of twenty years ſtanding, will at the end of twenty years, if I ſhould want his aſſiſtance, treat me as a ſtranger; and when I ſee men loſt in diſſipation pretend to take ſo tender a part in the concerns of every one, I readily preſume they are intereſted for no-body but themſelves.

There is, however, ſome truth in all this profeſſion: the French are naturally good-natured, open, hoſpitable, and generous. But they have a thouſand modes of expreſſion which are not to be too ſtrictly underſtood; a thouſand apparent

parent offers of kindneſs which they make only to be refuſed. They are no more than the ſnares of politeneſs laid for ruſtick ſimplicity. I never before heard ſuch profuſion of promiſes: *you may depend on my ſerving you, command my credit, my purſe, my houſe, my equipage.*——But if all this were ſincere, and literally taken, there would not be a people upon earth leſs attached to property. The community of poſſeſſions would be in a manner already eſtabliſhed; the rich always making offers and the poor accepting them, both would naturally ſoon come upon a level, and not the citizens of Sparta itſelf could ever have been more upon an equality than would be the people of Paris. On the contrary, there is not a place, perhaps, in the world, where the fortunes of men are ſo unequal, where are diſplayed at once the moſt ſumptuous opulence, and the moſt deplorable poverty. This is ſurely ſufficient to prove the inſignificance of that apparent commiſeration, which every one here affects to have for the wants and ſufferings of others, and that tenderneſs of heart, which in a moment contracts eternal friendſhip.

But if, inſtead of attending to profeſſions ſo juſtly to be ſuſpected, and aſſurances ſo liable to deceive, I deſire information, and would ſeek knowledge, here is its moſt agreeable ſource. One is immediately charmed with the good ſenſe which is to be met with in company of the French, not only among the learned, but with men of all ranks, and even among the women:

the turn of converſation is always eaſy and natural; it is neither dull nor frivolous, but learned without pedantry, gay without noiſe, polite without affectation, gallant without being fulſome, and jocoſe without being immodeſt. Their diſcourſe is neither made up of diſſertations nor epigrams; they reaſon without argumentation, and are witty without punning: they artfully unite reaſon and vivacity, maxims and rhapſodies; and mix the moſt pointed ſatire and refined flattery with ſtrictneſs of morals. They talk about every thing, becauſe every one has ſomething to ſay; they examine nothing to the bottom, for fear of being tedious, but propoſe matters in a curſory manner, and paſs them over with rapidity: every one gives his opinion, and ſupports it in few words; no one attacks with virulence that of another, nor obſtinately defends his own; they diſcuſs the point only for the ſake of improvement, and ſtop before it comes to a diſpute: every one improves, every one amuſes himſelf, and they part all ſatisfied with each other; even the philoſopher himſelf carrying away ſomething worthy his private meditation.

But, after all, what kind of knowledge do you think is to be gained from ſuch agreeable converſation? To form a right judgement of life and manners; to make a right uſe of ſociety; to know, at leaſt, the people with whom we converſe; there is nothing, Eloiſa, of all this: all that is here to be learnt, is to plead artfully the cauſe of falſehood; to confound, by philoſophy,

all

all the principles of virtue; to throw a falſe colour, by the help of ſophiſtry, on the paſſions and prejudices of mankind; and to give a certain turn to errour, agreeable to the faſhionable mode of thinking. It is not neceſſary to know the characters of men, but their intereſts, to gueſs their ſentiments on any occaſion. When a man talks on any ſubject, he rather expreſſes the opinions of his garb or his fraternity, than his own, and will change them as often as he changes his ſituation and circumſtances.

Dreſs him up, for inſtance, by turns, in the robe of a judge, a peer, and a divine, and you ſhall hear him ſucceſſively ſtand up with the ſame zeal for the rights of the people, the deſpotiſm of the prince, and the authority of the Inquiſition. There is one kind of reaſon for the lawyer, another for the officer of the revenue, and a third for the ſoldier. Each of them can demonſtrate the other two to be knaves; a concluſion not very difficult to be drawn by all three*. Thus men do not ſpeak their own ſentiments, but thoſe they would inſtil into others, and the

* We ought, perhaps, to overlook this reaſoning in a Swiſs, who ſees his own country well governed, without the eſtabliſhment of either of theſe profeſſions. How can a ſtate ſubſiſt without ſoldiers for its defenſe? No, every ſtate muſt have defenders. But its members ought to be ſoldiers from principle, and not by profeſſion. The ſame individuals among the Greeks and Romans were frequently magiſtrates in the city and officers in the field; and never were either of thoſe functions better diſcharged than before thoſe ſtrange prejudices took place, *which now* ſeparate and diſhonour them.

zeal which they affect is only the maſk of intereſt. You may imagine, however, that ſuch perſons as are unconnected and independent have at leaſt a perſonal character, and an opinion of their own. Not at all: they are only different machines, which never think for themſelves, but are ſet going by ſprings.

You need only inform yourſelf of their company, their clubs, their friends, the women they viſit, the authours they are acquainted with, and you may immediately tell what will be their opinion of the next book that is publiſhed, the next play that is acted, the works of this or that writer they know nothing of, or this or that ſyſtem of which they have not one idea. As ordinary clocks, alſo, are wound up to go but four-and-twenty hours, ſo are theſe people under the neceſſity of going every evening into company, to know what they are to think the next day.

Hence it is, that there is but a ſmall number of both ſexes who think for all the reſt, and for whom all the reſt talk and act. As every one conſiders his own particular intereſt, and none of them that of the publick, and as the intereſts of individuals are always oppoſed, there is amongſt them a perpetual claſhing of parties and cabals, a continual ebb and flow of prepoſſeſſions and contrary opinions; amidſt which the moſt violent tempers, agitated only by the reſt, ſeldom underſtand a word of the matter in diſpute. Every club has its rules, its opinions, its principles,

principles, which are no where elſe admitted. An honeſt man at one houſe is a knave at the next door. The good, the bad, the beautiful, the ugly, truth, and even virtue itſelf, have all only a limited and local exiſtence. Whoever chooſes a general acquaintance, therefore, and goes into different ſocieties, ſhould be more pliable than Alcibiades; he ſhould change his principles with his company, new-model his ſentiments in a manner at every ſtep, and lay down his maxims by the rod. He ought at every viſit to leave his conſcience, if he has one, at the door, and take up with that belonging to the houſe; as a new ſervant, on his enterance, puts on his livery, which he leaves behind him when turned out, and, if he chooſes it, again takes up his own, which ſerves him till he gets a new ſuit with a new place. But what is ſtill more extraordinary is, that every one here is perpetually contradicting himſelf, without being concerned at all about it. They have one ſet of principles for converſation, and another for their actions; nor is any body ſcandalized at their inconſiſtency, it being generally agreed they ſhould be very different. It is not required of an authour, particularly of a moral writer, that he ſhould maintain in converſation what he advances in his works; nor that he ſhould put in practice what he inculcates. His writings, converſation, and conduct, are three things eſſentially different, which he is not at all obliged to reconcile to each other. In a word, every thing

is abſurd, and yet nothing offends, becauſe abſurdity is the faſhion. Nay, there is attached to this incongruity of principles and manners a faſhionable air, of which they are proud, and which is frequently affected. In fact, although every one zealouſly preaches up the maxims of his profeſſion, he piques himſelf on the carriage and manners of another. The attorney, for inſtance, aſſumes the martial air of a ſoldier, and a petty clerk of the cuſtoms the ſupercilious deportment of a lord; the biſhop affects the gallantry of a fine gentleman; the courtier the preciſion of a philoſopher; and the ſtateſman the repartee and raillery of a wit. Even the plain mechanick, who knows not how to put on the airs of any other profeſſion, dreſſes himſelf up in a ſuit of black on Sundays, in order to paſs for a practitioner in the law. The military gentlemen alone, deſpiſing every other profeſſion, preſerve, without affectation, the manners of their own, which, to ſay the truth, are inſufferable. Not that M. de Moralt was in the wrong, when he gave the preference to the converſation of a ſoldier; but what might be true in his time is no longer ſo. The progreſs of literature has ſince improved converſation in general; and, as the gentlemen of the army deſpiſe ſuch improvement in their's, that which uſed to be the beſt, is at length become the worſt*.

Hence

* This reflexion, whether true or falſe, can be extended only to the ſubalterns, and thoſe who do not reſide in Paris; for almoſt all the great and polite men in the king-

dom

Hence it is, that the perſons we talk to are not thoſe with whom we converſe; their ſentiments do not come from the heart; their knowledge is not the acquiſition of their own genius; their converſation does not diſcover their thoughts; and one perceives nothing of them but their figure. Thus a man in company here is nearly in the ſame ſituation as if he were ſpectator of a moving picture, where he himſelf is the only figure capable of ſelf-motion.

Such are the notions I have formed of great ſocieties, by that which I have ſeen at Paris. They may, nevertheleſs, be rather adapted to my own particular ſituation, than to the true ſtate of things, and will doubtleſs improve as I become more acquainted with the manners of the world. Beſides this, I have hitherto kept no other company than that into which I have been introduced by the friends of Lord B——, and am ſenſible it is neceſſary to deſcend to perſons of different ranks, to know the peculiar manners of a country, thoſe of the opulent being almoſt every where the ſame. I ſhall endeavour to inform myſelf better hereafter: in the mean time, I leave you to judge whether I have not ſufficient reaſon to call this crowded ſcene a deſert, and to be terrified by a ſolitude,

dom are in the ſervice, and even the court itſelf is military. But there is a great difference between the manners acquired in a campaign, and thoſe which are contracted by living in garriſon.

where I find only an empty appearance of ſentiments and of ſincerity, that falſifies itſelf in the inſtant of expreſſion; and where I perceive only the mere apparitions of men, phantoms that ſtrike the eye for a moment, but are inſenſible to the touch. Hitherto I have ſeen a great number of maſks: when ſhall I behold the faces of mankind?

LETTER LXXX.

FROM ELOISA.

YES, my friend, we ſhall continue to be united, notwithſtanding our ſeparation: we ſhall be happy in ſpite of fortune. It is the union of minds which conſtitutes their true felicity: the mutual attraction of hearts does not follow the *ratio* of their diſtance, and our's would be in contact were they diſtant as the poles aſunder. I am ſenſible with you, that true lovers have a thouſand expedients to ſooth the pains of abſence, and to fly to each other's arms in a moment. Hence have they more frequent interviews even in abſence than when they ſee each other every day, for no ſooner is either alone, than they are both together. If you, my friend, can taſte that pleaſure every evening, I feaſt on it a hundred times a day. I am more alone, and am ſurrounded by objects I cannot look on without calling you to mind, without finding you ever near me.

Quì canto dolcemente, e quì s'assise:
Quì si rivolse, e quì ritenne il passo;
Quì co 'begli occhi me trafise il core:
Quì disse una parola, e quì sorrise.

Each well-known object, left behind,
Recalls my lover to my mind:
'Twas here, I cry, he sat and sung,
While fondly on his lips I hung;
Here kindly spoke, here sweetly smil'd,
And there his looks my heart beguil'd.

But is it so with you? can you thus alleviate the pains of absence? can you experience the sweets of a peaceful and tender passion, that speaks to the heart without inflaming the senses? Are your griefs at present more prudent than were formerly your desires? The violence of your first letter still makes me tremble. I dread those deceitful transports, by so much the more dangerous, as the imagination which excites them is the less subject to control; and I fear lest even your excess of love should prove injurious to the object of it. Alas! you know not your sensations are too indelicate to perceive how offensive to love is an irrational homage. You do not consider that your life is mine, nor that self-preservation leads us frequently to destruction. Sensual man! will you never learn to love? Call to mind those peaceful, those tender sensations you once felt, and so affectingly described. If such be the higest pleasures which even happy lovers can taste, they are the only ones wherein those who pine in absence are permitted to indulge themselves; and those

who

who once have felt them, though but for a moment, ſhould never regret the loſs of any other. I remember the reflexions we made in reading your Plutarch, on the ſenſuality and depravity of taſte, which debaſe our nature. Were ſuch wretched pleaſures attended only with the circumſtance of their not being mutual, it were enough, we ſaid, to render them inſipid and contemptible. Let us apply the ſame concluſion to the ſallies of an extravagant imagination, to which it is no leſs applicable. What can the wretch enjoy whoſe pleaſures are confined to himſelf alone? His pleaſures are lifeleſs; but thine, O love! are animated and generous delights. It is the union of ſouls: we receive more pleaſure from that which we excite, than from our own enjoyment.

But, pray, tell me, my friend, in what language, or rather in what jargon, is the deſcription you give me in your laſt letter? Did you not make uſe of it as an occaſional diſplay of your wit? If you intend to repeat it in your letters to me, it will be neceſſary to ſend me a dictionary. What is it you mean by the opinion of a garb? by a conſcience that is to be put off and on like a livery? by laying down maxims by the rod? How would you have a poor ſimple Swiſs comprehend thoſe ſublime tropes and figures? Have you not already borrowed ſome of the tinſel underſtanding of the people you deſcribe? Take care, my good friend, how you proceed. Do you not think the metaphors of the Chevalier Marini, which you have

ſo often laughed at, bear ſome reſemblance to your own? If a garment may be ſaid to think in a letter, why not that fire may ſweat in a ſonnet*?

To obſerve, in the ſpace of three weeks, all the different company that is kept in a great city; to paſs judgement on their converſation; to diſtinguiſh preciſely the falſe from the true; the real from the affected; the difference between their thoughts and words; this is the very thing for which the French are frequently cenſured by people of other countries; but this nation eſpecially deſerves to be ſtudied more at leiſure. I as little approve alſo of perſons ſpeaking ill of a country where they reſide and are well received: they had better, in my judgement, ſubmit to be deceived by appearances, than to moralize at the expenſe of their hoſts. In ſhort, I always ſuſpect the candour of thoſe obſervers who ſet up for wits. I am always apprehenſive leſt they ſhould inſenſibly ſacrifice the real ſtate of things to the arts of deſcription, and affect a brilliancy of ſtile at the expenſe of truth.

You know, my friend, the ſaying of Moralt, that wit is the epidemical madneſs of the French: I am miſtaken, if I do not diſcover ſome marks of your being yourſelf infected with this phrenzy. There is this difference, however,

* *Sudate, O fochi, a preparar metalli.*
Ye ſweating fires, that in the furnace blaze.
A line of a ſonnet by Marini.

ever, that while it is agreeable enough in the French, the Swiſs are of all people in the world thoſe whom it becomes leaſt. There is ſomething very quaint and far-fetched in many paſſages of your letter. I do not ſpeak of the lively turn, or animated expreſſions, which are dictated by any peculiar ſtrength of ſentiments, but of that affected prettineſs of ſtile, which, being unnatural in itſelf, can be natural to no people whatever, but betrays the abſurd pretenſions of the perſon who uſes it. Pretenſions with thoſe we love! Good God! ought not all our pretenſions to be confined to the object beloved? It may be permitted to enliven an indifferent converſation with ſuch rhetorical flouriſhes, and they may paſs off as fine ſtrokes of wit; but this is not the language adapted to the intercourſe of lovers: the florid jargon of gallantry comes leſs from the heart than the moſt rude and ſimple of all dialects. I appeal to yourſelf: did wit ever find an opportunity to intrude into our private parties? If thoſe fond, thoſe endearing converſations had a charm to diſpel and keep wit at a diſtance, how ill-ſuited are its embelliſhments to the letters of abſence, always clouded in ſome meaſure with ſorrow, and in which the heart expreſſes itſelf with peculiar tenderneſs? But, though every paſſion truely great ſhould be ſerious, exceſs of joy ſooner calling forth our tears than our ſmiles, I would not have love be always ſad; its chearfulneſs ſhould, nevertheleſs, be ſimple and unaffected, without art, without

out embelliſhment, and undiſſembled as the paſſion itſelf. In a word, I would have love appear in its native graces, and not in the falſe ornaments of wit.

My *conſtant companion*, in whoſe apartment I write this letter, pretends, that in the beginning of it I had juſt that pleaſantry of diſpoſition which love inſpires; but I know not what is become of it. In proportion as I proceed, a languor pervades my heart, and hardly leaves me ſpirits to write the reproaches ſhe would have me make you. For you are to know the above hypercriticiſms are rather her's than my own. It was ſhe that dictated in particular the firſt article, laughing like an ideot, and inſiſting on my not altering a ſingle ſyllable. She ſays, it is to teach you to reſpect Marini, whom ſhe patronizes, and you have the preſumption to ridicule.

But can you gueſs the cauſe of our good-humour? It is her approaching marriage. The contract was ſigned laſt night, and the day is fixed for Monday ſe'nnight. If ever love was a chearful paſſion, it is ſurely ſo with her: ſurely no girl was ever ſo droll upon the like occaſion.

The good Mr. Orbe, whoſe head is alſo a little turned, was highly delighted with the comical manner in which he was received. Leſs difficult to be pleaſed than you were, he takes great pleaſure in adding to the pleaſantry of courtſhip, and looks upon the art of diverting his miſtreſs as a maſter-piece in making love.

For

For her part, we may talk to her as we pleaſe of decorum, tell her as much as we will of the grave and ſerious turn ſhe ought to aſſume on the point of matrimony, and of doing honour to the virgin ſtate ſhe is going to quit; ſhe laughs at all we can ſay, as ridiculous grimace, and tells Mr. Orbe to his face, that on the wedding-day ſhe ſhall be in the beſt humour in the world, and that one cannot go too chearfully to be married. But the little diſſembler does not tell all; I ſurpriſed her this morning wiping her eyes, which were red with crying; and I would lay a wager, the tears of the night equal the ſmiles of the day. She is going to bind herſelf in new chains, that will relax the gentle ties of friendſhip; ſhe is entering on a manner of life very different to that which ſhe moſt affected. Hitherto, always pleaſed and tranquil, ſhe is going to run thoſe hazards which are inſeparable from the beſt marriage; and, whatever face ſhe may aſſume, I ſee that, as a clear and ſmooth water begins to be troubled at the approach of a ſtorm, ſo her chaſte and timid heart feels an alarm at her approaching change of condition.

May they be happy, my dear friend! They love, and will be united in marriage: they will reap the tranſports of mutual enjoyment without obſtacles, without fear, without remorſe! Adieu!—my heart is full—I can write no more.

P. S.—

P. S.—We have ſeen Lord B———, but he was in ſuch haſte to proceed on his journey, that he ſtaid with us but a moment. Impreſſed with a due ſenſe of the obligations we owe him, I would have made him my acknowledgements and your's; but, I know not how, I was aſhamed. It is ſurely a kind of inſult offered to his unparalleled generoſity to thank ſuch a man for any thing!

LETTER LXXXI.

TO ELOISA.

WHAT children does the impetuoſity of our paſſions make of us! how readily does an extravagant affection nouriſh itſelf on chimeras! and how eaſily are our too violent deſires prevented by the moſt frivolous objects! I received your letter with as much rapture as your preſence could have inſpired: in the exceſs of my tranſport, a piece of folded paper ſupplying in my mind the place of Eloiſa. One of the greateſt evils of abſence, and the only one which reaſon cannot alleviate, is the inquietude we are under concerning the actual ſtate of the perſon we love. Her health, her life, her repoſe her affections, nothing eſcapes the apprehenſions of him who has every thing to loſe. Nor are we more certain of the preſent condition than of the future; and every poſſible accident is realized

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in the mind of the timid lover. I breathe, and am alive again. You are in health and ſtill love me; or rather ten days ago you loved me, and was well: but who can aſſure me it is ſo at this inſtant? How cruel, how tormenting is abſence! how fatally capricious is that ſituation in which we can enjoy only the paſt moment, for the future is not yet arrived!

Had you ſaid nothing about your *conſtant companion*, I ſhould have detected her little malice in the cenſures paſſed on my obſervations, and her old grudge in the apology for Marini; but, if it be permitted me in turn to apologize for myſelf, I will not make her wait for a reply.

In the firſt place then, my dear couſin, for it is to her I ſhould addreſs my anſwer, as to the ſtile of my remarks, I have adopted that of the ſubject: I endeavoured to give you at once both an idea and an example of the mode of converſation in faſhion; and thus, following an ancient precept, I wrote to you in the ſame manner they talk in ſome companies to each other. Beſides, it is not the uſe of rhetorical figures, but the choice of them, which I blame in Marini. If a man has the leaſt warmth of imagination, he muſt neceſſarily uſe metaphors and figurative expreſſions to make himſelf underſtood. Even your own letters are full of them, without your knowing it; and I will maintain it, that none but a geometrician or a blockhead can talk without a metaphor. In effect, the ſame ſentiment.

timent may admit of an hundred different degrees of energy; and how are we to determine the preciſe degree in which to enforce it, but by the turn of expreſſion? I muſt confeſs, I could not myſelf help ſmiling at the abſurdity of ſome phraſes I uſed. I thank you for the trouble you took to pick them out. But let them ſtand where they are, you will find them clear and peculiarly emphatical. Let us ſuppoſe that your two ſprightly ſparkling eyes, whoſe language is now ſo expreſſive, were ſeparated one from the other, and from the ſet of features to which they give ſuch luſtre; what think you, couſin, they would ſay even with all their vivacity and fire? Believe me, they would loſe all power of expreſſion; they would be mute even to Mr. Orbe.

Is not the firſt thing that preſents itſelf to obſervation in a ſtrange country, the general caſt and turn of converſation? and is not this the firſt obſervation I made in Paris? I have written to you only what is ſaid, and not what is done in this city. If I remarked a contraſt between the diſcourſe, the ſentiments, and the actions of the people, it is becauſe the contraſt is too ſtriking to eſcape the moſt ſuperficial obſerver. When I ſee the ſame perſons change their maxims according to the company they frequent, Moliniſts in one, and Janſeniſts in another, court ſycophants with the miniſter, and factious grumblers with an anti-courtier: when I ſee a man in lace and embroidery rail at luxury, an officer of the revenue againſt impoſts,

impoſts, or a prelate againſt gluttony; when I hear a court-lady talk of modeſty, a noble lord of honeſty, an authour of candour, or an abbé of religion, and ſee nobody ſurpriſed at theſe abſurdities, is it not natural enough to conclude that people here are as little anxious to hear truth as to ſpeak it? and that, ſo far from endeavouring to perſuade others into their own opinion, they care not whether they are believed or not?

But let this ſuffice, in the way of pleaſantry, for an anſwer to our couſin. I will lay aſide an affectation to which we are all three ſtrangers, and I hope you will find in me for the future as little of the ſatiriſt as the wit. And now, Eloiſa, let me reply to you; for I am at no loſs to diſtinguiſh between critical raillery and ſerious reproaches.

I cannot conceive how both you and your couſin could ſo egregiouſly miſtake the object of my deſcription. It was not the French in particular on whom I intended to animadvert. For if the characters of nations can be determined only by their difference, how can I, who have as yet no acquaintance with any other, pretend to draw the character of this? I ſhould not beſides have been ſo indiſcrete as to fix on the metropolis for the place of obſervation. I am not ignorant that capitul cities differ leſs from each other than the national characters of the people, which are there in a great meaſure loſt and confounded, as well from the influence of courts, all which bear a great

a great reſemblance to each other, as from the common conſequence of living in a cloſe and numerous ſociety; which is alſo every where nearly the ſame, and prevails over the original and peculiar character of the country.

Were I to ſtudy the natural characteriſticks of a people, I would repair to ſome of the more diſtant provinces, where the inhabitants ſtill purſue their natural inclinations. I would proceed ſlowly and carefully through ſeveral of thoſe provinces, and thoſe at greateſt diſtance from each other: from the difference I might obſerve between them, I would then trace the peculiar genius of each province; from what was their's in common, and not cuſtomary to other countries, I would trace the genius of the nation in general: and what appeared common to all nations, I ſhould regard as characteriſticks of mankind in general. But I have neither formed ſo extenſive a project; nor, if I had, am I poſſeſſed of the neceſſary experience to put it in execution. My deſign is to improve myſelf in the knowledge of mankind univerſally, and my method is to conſider man in his ſeveral relations. I have hitherto been acquainted only with ſmall ſocieties, ſcattered up and down, in a manner alone, and without connexions. At preſent I am in the midſt of others, which are ſurrounded by multitudes on the ſame ſpot, from which I ſhall begin to judge of the genuine effects of ſociety; for if men are conſtantly made better by their aſſociation, the more numerous and

cloſely connected they are, ſtill the better they ought to be, and their manners ſhould be more ſimple and leſs corrupted at Paris than in the Valais; but if experience prove the contrary, we muſt draw the oppoſite concluſion.

This method, I confeſs, may in time lead to the knowledge of the national characters of people; but by a round ſo tedious and indirect, that I may perhaps never be qualified to determine that of any one nation upon earth. I muſt begin to make my obſervations on the firſt country in which I reſide, proceeding in the others I paſs through to mark the difference between them and the firſt: comparing France to every other, as we deſcribe an olive-tree by a willow, or a palm-tree by a fir, and muſt defer, forming my judgement of the firſt people obſerved, till I have finiſhed my obſervations on all the reſt.

Pleaſe to diſtinguiſh then, my charming monitor, between philoſophical obſervation and national ſatire. It is not the Pariſians that I ſtudy, but the inhabitants of a great city; and I know not whether the remarks I have made be not as applicable to thoſe of Rome and London, as of Paris. Moral principles do not depend on the cuſtoms of a people; ſo that in ſpite of their reigning prejudices I can perceive what is wrong in itſelf: but I know not whether I can juſtly attribute it to the Frenchman, or the *man*; whether it be the effect of habit or of nature. Vice is in every place offenſive to an impartial eye

eye, and it is no more blameable to reprove it in whatever country it his found, than to correct the failings of humanity, becauſe we live among men. Am not I at preſent an inhabitant of Paris? Perhaps I may have already inconſciouſly contributed my ſhare to the diſorders I have remarked: perhaps too long a ſtay may corrupt even my inclinations, and at the end of a year I may be no more than a Pariſian myſelf; if, in order to be deſerving of Eloiſa, I do not cheriſh the ſpirit of liberty, and the manners of a free citizen. Let me proceed, therefore, without reſtraint, in deſcribing objects I ſhould bluſh to reſemble, and in animating my zeal for virtue, by diſplaying the diſguſtful pictures of falſehood and vice.

Were my employment and fortune in my own power, I might without doubt make choice of other ſubjects for my letters. You were not diſpleaſed with thoſe I wrote you from Meillerie and the Valais: but, my dear friend, it is neceſſary for me, in order to ſupport the noiſe and hurry of the world in which I am obliged to live, to conſole myſelf in writing to you; and the thoughts of drawing up my narratives for your peruſal ſhould excite me to look out for proper ſubjects. Diſcouragement would otherwiſe overtake me at every ſtep, and I muſt entirely relinquiſh my obſervations on mankind, if you refuſe to hear me. Conſider that, to live in a manner ſo little conformable to my taſte, I make an effort not unworthy of its cauſe: and

to enable you to judge of what I muſt undergo to obtain you, permit me to ſpeak ſometimes of the maxims I am forced to learn, and the obſtacles I am obliged to encounter.

In ſpite of my ſlow pace, and unavoidable avocations, my collection was finiſhed when your letter happily arrived to prolong my taſk of copying: but I admire, in ſeeing it ſo ſhort, how you contrive to ſay ſo much in ſo few words. I will maintain it, there can be no reading ſo delightful as that of your letters, even to thoſe to whom you are a ſtranger, if their hearts do but ſympathiſe with our's. But how can you be a ſtranger to any one who reads your letters? Is it poſſible that a manner ſo engaging, that ſentiments ſo tender, can belong to any other than Eloiſa? Your enchanting looks accompany every ſentence, your charming voice pronounces every word. It is impoſſible for any other to love, to think, to ſpeak, to act, to write like Eloiſa. Be not ſurpriſed then if your letters, which ſo ſtrikingly convey your form and feature, ſhould ſometimes have the ſame effect as your preſence on a lover, who ſo devoutly idolizes your perſon. I loſe my ſenſes in their peruſal; my head grows giddy; a devouring flame conſumes me; my blood boils, and I become frantick with paſſion. I fancy I ſee, I feel, I preſs you to my heart. Adoreable object! bewitching beauty! ſource of rapture and delight! image of thoſe angelick forms which are the fabled companions of the bleſſed! come to my

arms

arms——ſhe is here——I claſp her in my embrace——ah! no, ſhe is vaniſhed; and I graſp but at a ſhadow. Indeed, my dear friend, you are too charming; you have been too indulgent to the weakneſs of a heart, that can never forget your charms, nor your tenderneſs. Your beauty even triumphs in its abſence, it purſues me wherever I go, it makes me dread to be alone, and it is my greateſt miſery that I dare not give myſelf to the contemplation of ſo raviſhing an object.

Our friends, then, I find will be united in ſpite of all obſtacles; or rather they are ſo while I am now writing. Amiable and deſerving pair! may heaven beſtow on them all the bleſſings their prudent and peaceful affections, innocence of manners, and goodneſs of heart deſerve! may it bleſs them with that happineſs it is ſo ſparing of to thoſe who were formed by nature to taſte its delights! happy indeed will they be, if heaven ſhould grant to them what it has taken from us! and yet, Eloiſa, we may draw ſome conſolation even from our misfortunes. Do you not perceive that our ſevereſt troubles are not without their peculiar ſatisfactions; and that although our friends may taſte pleaſures of which we are deprived, we enjoy others of which they are ignorant? Yes, my gentle friend, in ſpite of abſence, loſſes, fears; in ſpite even of deſpair itſelf, the powerful exertion of two hearts, longing for each other, is always attended with a ſecret pleaſure unknown to thoſe at eaſe. This is one

of the miracles of love, that teacheth us how to extract pleaſure from pain, and would make us look upon a ſtate of indifference as the greateſt of all misfortunes. Though we lament our own ſituation, then, let us not envy that of others. On the whole, perhaps, there is none preferable to our own: as the Deity derives his happineſs from himſelf, the hearts that glow with a celeſtial paſſion find in themſelves the ſource of refined enjoyment, independent of fortune.

LETTER LXXXII.

TO ELOISA.

AT length, Eloiſa, behold me ſwim with the ſtream. My collection being finiſhed, I begin to frequent the publick diverſions, and to ſup in company: I ſpend the whole day abroad, and am attentive to every ſtriking object: but, perceiving nothing that reſembles you, I recollect myſelf in the midſt of noiſe and confuſion, and converſe in ſecret with my love. It is not, however, that this buſy and tumultuous life has not in it ſomething agreeable, or that ſuch a vaſt variety of objects does not preſent a conſiderable fund of gratification to the curioſity of a ſtranger: but, to taſte the entertainment they afford, the heart ſhould be vacant, and the underſtanding idle. Both love and reaſon ſeem to unite in raiſing my diſguſt againſt ſuch amuſement. Every thing here being confined to appearances

pearances, which are every inſtant changing, I have neither the time to be affected with, nor to examine any thing.

Hence I begin to ſee the difficulties of ſtudying the world, and indeed I know not what ſituation is moſt likely to make me a proficient in this ſcience. The ſpeculatiſt lives at too great a diſtance, and the man of buſineſs too near the object, to view it critically: the one ſees too much to be able to reflect on any part, and the other too little to judge of the whole piece. Every object that ſtrikes the philoſopher he examines apart, and, not being able to diſcern its connexions and relations with others, that lie beyond the field of his obſervation, he never ſees them placed in their proper point of view, and knows neither their real cauſes nor effects The man of buſineſs ſees all, and has leiſure to think on nothing. The inſtability of objects permits him barely to perceive their exiſtence and not to examine their qualities: they paſs in ſucceſſion before him with ſuch rapidity, that they efface the impreſſion of each other, and load his memory only with the chaos of confuſed ideas. It is alſo as impoſſible to make obſervations, and meditate on them alternately; as the ſcene requires a conſtant and unremitted attention, which reflexion would interrupt. A man who would divide his time by intervals between ſolitude and ſociety, always perplexed in retirement and to ſeek in the world, would be able to do nothing in either. There is but one way: and

that is; to divide the whole period of life into two parts; applying the one to obſervation, and the other to reflexion. But this is next to impoſſible; for reaſon is not a piece of furniture, that can be thrown aſide and put to uſe again at pleaſure: the man who ſhould live ten years without reflexion will never again be capable of it as long as he lives.

I find it is a folly to think to ſtudy mankind in the quality of a ſimple ſpectator. He who pretends only to make obſervations will be able to obſerve nothing: for being uſeleſs to the men of buſineſs, and troubleſome to thoſe of pleaſure, he will no where find admittance. We can have the opportunity of ſeeing others act, in proportion only as we act with them; in the ſchool of the world, as well as in that of love, we muſt begin by practiſing whatever we deſire to learn.

What method then can I take? I that am a ſtranger, and can follow no employment in this country, and whom even the difference of religion excludes from aſpiring to office? I am reduced to be humble, in order to inſtruct myſelf; and, as I can never be uſeful, muſt endeavour to make myſelf agreeable. To this end, I aim as much as poſſible to be polite without flattery, complaiſant without meanneſs, and to put ſo good a face on what is tolerable in ſociety that I may be admitted into it, without being under the neceſſity of adopting its vices. Every man that would ſee the world, and has nothing

to

to do in it, ought at leaſt to adopt its manneriſm a certain degree. For what pretenſions can he have to be admitted into the ſociety of people to whom he can be of no ſervice, and to whom he has not the addreſs to make himſelf agreeable? But, if he has found out this art, it is all that is required of him, particularly if he be a ſtranger. Such a one has no occaſion to take part in their cabals, their intrigues, or their quarrels: if he behaves obligingly to every one; if he neither excludes, nor prefers women of a certain character; if he keeps the ſecrets of the company into which he is admitted; if he turns not into ridicule at one houſe what he ſees in another; if he avoids making confidents; entering into broils; and, in particular, if he maintains a certain perſonal dignity; he may ſee the world without moleſtation, preſerve the purity of his manners, his probity, and even his frankneſs itſelf, if it ariſes from a ſpirit of liberty, and not from that of party. This is what I have endeavoured to do, agreeably to the advice of ſome people of ſenſe, whom I have choſen for my adviſers, among the acquaintance Lord B——'s intereſt has procured me. In conſequence of this, I begin now to be admitted into companies leſs numerous and more ſelect. Hitherto I have been chiefly invited to regular dinners, where the only woman at table is the miſtreſs of the family; where open houſe is kept for all the idle people about Paris, with whom they have the ſlighteſt acquaintance; and where every one

r in wit or flattery, as he can converſation being in general ſed, and very much reſembling ick ordinary.

eſent initiated into the more ſecret myſ viſiting; being invited to private ſuppers, where the door is ſhut againſt all ſtrolling and chance gueſts, and every one is upon an agreeable footing, if not with each other, at leaſt with the provider of the entertainment. Here it is that the women are leſs reſerved, and their real characters more eaſily diſcovered. The converſation is in theſe parties carried on with more decorum, and is more refined and ſatirical: inſtead of talking of the publick news, plays, promotions, births, deaths, and marriages, which were the topicks of the morning, they here take a review of the ſeveral anecdotes of Paris, divulge the ſecret articles of the ſcandalous chronicle, turn the good and bad alike into ridicule, and, in artfully deſcribing the characters of others, undeſignedly diſplay their own. It is in theſe companies that the little circumſpection which remains has invented a peculiar kind of language, under which they affect to render their ſatire more obſcure, while it only makes it more ſevere. It is here, in a word, that they carefully ſharpen the poignard, under pretenſe of making it leſs hurtful; but, in fact, only to make it wound the deeper. To judge, however, of this converſation according to our notions of things, we ſhould be in the wrong to call

call it ſatirical; for it conſiſts more of raillery than cenſure, and turns leſs upon the vicious than the ridiculous.—Satire, in general, is not common in large cities, where that which is downright wicked is too ſimple to be worth talking about. What can they condemn where virtue is in no eſteem? and what ſhould they revile where nothing is held to be villainous? At Paris, more particularly, where every thing is ſeen in an agreeable light, the repreſentation of things that ought to raiſe our indignation is well received, if it be but wrapped up in a ſong or an epigram. The fine ladies of this country do not like to be diſpleaſed: and are, therefore, diſpleaſed at nothing; they love to laugh, but woe be to him who happens to be the ſubject of their ridicule; the ſcars this cauſtick leaves are never to be effaced; they not only defame good manners and virtue, but exaggerate even vice itſelf. But to return to our company.

What ſtrikes me moſt in theſe ſelect meetings, is to ſee that half a dozen people expreſsly choſen to entertain one another agreeably, and between whom there generally ſubſiſt very intimate connexions, cannot converſe an hour together without introducing the affairs of half the people in Paris; juſt as if their hearts had nothing to ſay to each other, or that there was no perſon in company of merit enough to engage their attention. You know, Eloiſa, how far otherwiſe it was with us, when we ſupped

together at your couſin's, or your own apartment; how we could find means, in ſpite of conſtraint and ſecreſy, to turn the diſcourſe on ſubjects that related to ourſelves; how at every moving reflexion, at every ſubtile illuſion, a look more ſwift than lightening, a ſigh rather imagined than perceived, conveyed the pleaſing ſenſation from one heart to the other.

If the diſcourſe here turn by accident on any of the company, it is commonly carried on in a jargon known only to the perſons concerned, and which others need a vocabulary to underſtand. Thus, by talking as it were in cypher, they are enabled to banter each other with inſipid raillery, in which the greateſt blockhead does not always ſhine the leaſt. In the mean time, perhaps a third part of the company, incapable of taking the jeſt, are either reduced to a diſagreeable ſilence, or to laugh at what they do not comprehend. Of this kind, Eloiſa, is all the tenderneſs and affection I have obſerved in the intimacies of this country: thoſe of a more private nature, with only a ſecond perſon, I have not, nor ever ſhall have experienced.

In the midſt of all this, however, if a man of any weight and conſequence ſhould enter on a grave diſcourſe, or begin to diſcuſs a ſerious queſtion, a general attention would be immediately fixed on this new object: men and women, old and young, every one would be ready to enter into his examination; and it is aſtoniſhing how much good ſenſe and preciſion would,

as it were through emulation, ſally out of their extravagant heads*. A point of morality could not be better determined in a ſociety of philoſophers, that in that of a fine lady at Paris: their concluſions would even be leſs preciſe and ſevere; for the philoſopher, who thinks himſelf obliged to act as he ſpeaks, will be leſs rigid in his principles; but, where morality is nothing more than a topick of diſcourſe, the ſeverity of it is of no conſequence: and no one is diſpleaſed at an opportunity of checking philoſophical pride, by placing virtue out of its reach.

Beſides this, influenced by a knowledge of the world and of their own hearts, all agree in thinking human nature as depraved as poſſible: hence their philoſophy is always of the gloomy caſt; they are ever indulging their own vanity, by depreciating the virtues of humanity; always accounting for good actions from vicious motives, and attributing to mankind in general the depravity of their own minds.

And yet, notwithſtanding their adopting this abject doctrine, one of the favourite topicks of

* Provided always that no unforeſeen object of pleaſantry ſtarts up to diſturb their gravity; for in that caſe, it is laid hold of by every one in a moment, and it is impoſſible to recall their ſerious attention. I remember that a handful of gingerbread cakes once ludicrouſly put an end to a dramatick repreſentation at the fair. The actors, indeed, were quadrupeds; but how many trifling things are there that would prove gingerbread cakes to ſome ſort of men! It is well known whom Fontenelle intended to deſcribe in his hiſtory of the Tyrintians.

theſe ſocieties is *ſentiment*; a word by which we are not to underſtand the ſenſation of a heart ſuſceptible of love or friendſhip: this would be thought vulgar and diſguſting. No, ſentiment conſiſts in great and general maxims; heightened by the moſt ſublime ſubtilities of metaphyſicks. I can ſafely ſay that, in my life, I have never heard ſo much talk of ſentiment, nor ever comprehended ſo little what was meant by it; ſo inconceivable are theſe French refinements! Our ſimple hearts, Eloiſa, never were governed by any of theſe fine maxims; and I am afraid it is with ſentiment in the polite world, as it is with Homer among the pedants, who diſcover in him a thouſand imaginary beauties, for want of taſte to point out his real ones. So much ſentiment is here laid out in wit, and evaporated in converſation, that none is left to influence their actions. Happily, politeneſs ſupplies its place, and people act from cuſtom nearly as they would from ſenſibility: at leaſt ſo long as it coſts them only a few compliments, and ſuch trifling reſtraints, as they willingly laid themſelves under in order to be reſpected; but, if any conſiderable ſacrifice of their eaſe or intereſt is required, adieu to ſentiment: politeneſs does not proceed ſo far: ſo far as it goes, however, you can hardly believe how nicely every article of behaviour is weighed, meaſured, and eſtimated. What is not regulated by ſentiment is ſubjected to cuſtom, by which indeed every thing here is governed. Theſe people are all profeſſed copy-

iſts;

iſts; and, though they abound in originals, nobody knows any thing of them, or preſumes to be ſo himſelf. *To do like other people*, is a maxim of the greateſt weight in this country: and *this is the mode—that is not the mode*, are deciſions from which there is no appeal.

This apparent regularity gives to the common, and even the moſt ſerious tranſactions of life, the moſt comical air in the world. They have ſettled even the very moment when it is proper to ſend cards to their acquaintance; when to viſit with a card, that is, to viſit without viſiting at all; when to do it in perſon; when it is proper to be at home; when to be denied; what advances it is proper to make, or reject, on every occaſion; what degree of ſorrow ſhould be affected at the death of ſuch or ſuch a one*; how long to mourn in the country; when they may come to conſole themſelves in town; the very day, and even the minute, when the afflicted is permitted to give a ball, or go to the play. Every body in the ſame circumſtances does the ſame thing: they keep time, and their motions are made all together, like the evolutions of a regiment in battalia; ſo

* To be afflicted at the deceaſe of any perſon betrays a ſenſe of humanity, and is a ſign of a good diſpoſition, but is no inſtance of virtue; there being no moral obligation to lament even the death of a father. Whoever in ſuch a caſe, therefore, is not really afflicted, ought not to affect the appearance of it; for it is more neceſſary always to avoid deceit, than to comply with cuſtom.

ſo that you would think them ſo many puppets, nailed to the ſame board, or moved by the ſame wire.

Now, as it is morally impoſſible that all theſe people, though they act in the ſame manner, ſhould be at once equally affected, it is plain, their peculiar characters are not to be known by their actions; it is plain their diſcourſe is only a formal jargon, which aſſiſts us leſs to form a judgement of the French manners in general, than the peculiar mode of converſing in Paris. In like manner, we learn only here their terms of converſation, but nothing by which we can judge of their eſtimation in the conduct of life. I ſay the ſame of moſt of their writings; and even of their theatrical repreſentations; the ſtage, ſince the time of Moliere, being a place where they rather repeat agreeable dialogues, than give a repreſentation of life and manners. There are here three theatres: on two of which they only introduce imaginary characters; ſuch as Harlequin, Pantaloon, and Scaramouch, on the one; and, on the other, gods, devils, and conjurers. On the third they repreſent thoſe immortal dramas, which give us ſo much pleaſure in reading, and other new pieces, which are from time to time written for the ſtage; many of which are tragical, but not affecting. And, though the ſentiments contained in them are ſometimes natural, and well enough adapted to the human heart, they give us not the leaſt light

light into the peculiar manners of the people to whom they afford entertainment.

The inſtitution of tragedy was originally founded on religion, whoſe ſanction was ſufficient to eſtabliſh its authority. Beſides this, the tragick ſcene always preſented to the Greeks an inſtructive and agreeable repreſentation, either in the misfortunes of the Perſians, their enemies, or in the vices and follies of the kings from which they themſelves were delivered. Should they repreſent in like manner at Berne, at Zurich, or at the Hague, the ancient tyranny of the houſe of Auſtria, the love of liberty and their country would make ſuch a repreſentation peculiarly intereſting to the ſpectators: but I would be glad to know of what uſe are the tragedies of Corneille at Paris; and what intereſt its citizens can take in the fate of a Pompey or Sertorius. The Greek tragedies turned upon real events, or ſuch as were ſuppoſed to be real, being founded on hiſtorical tradition. But what buſineſs has a refined heroick paſſion in the breaſts of the great? The conflicts of love and virtue cauſe them, no doubt, many an unhappy day and ſleepleſs night! the heart is doubtleſs vaſtly concerned in the marriages of kings! judge then of the probability and uſe of ſo many performances all turning on ſuch imaginary ſubjects.

As to comedy, it ſhould certainly be a lively repreſentation of the manners of the people for whom it is written; that it may ſerve them as a mirrour to ſhow them their vices and follies.

Terence

Terence and Plautus miſtook their ſubjects; but their predeceſſors, Ariſtophanes and Menander, diſplayed Athenian manners before an Athenian audience; and ſince theſe, Moliere, and Moliere only, has repreſented ſtill more ingenuouſly in France the manners of the French in the laſt age.

The objects of the picture are ſince changed; but they have never ſince had ſo faithful, ſo maſterly a painter. At preſent, they only copy on the theatre the manner of converſing in about an hundred families in Paris; and this is their repreſentation of French manners: ſo that there are in this great city five or ſix hundred thouſand perſons, whoſe various characters are never introduced on the ſtage. Moliere deſcribed the ſhopkeeper and artizan, as well as the marquis: Socrates introduces the diſcourſes of coachmen, carpenters, ſhoemakers, and maſons. But our preſent writers, quite of another ſtamp, think it beneath them to know what paſſes in a trader's compting-houſe or the ſhop of a mechanick: their dramas muſt conſiſt of perſons of the firſt quality; for by the grandeur of their characters they aim at a degree of eminence they never could attain by the force of genius. Nay, the audience itſelf is become ſo very delicate, that the chief of the ſpectators are as jealous of place and precedence in going to a play as in making a viſit, never condeſcending to be preſent at the repreſentation of characters of inferior condition.

Indeed,

Indeed, the people of fashion here are considered by themselves as the only inhabitants of the earth; all the rest of mankind are nothing. All the world keep a coach, a Swiss, and a *Maitre d'Hotel:* all the world, therefore, consists of a very small number of people. Those who walk a-foot are nobody; they are your common people, human creatures, the vulgar, folks in short of another world: so that a coach is not so necessary to carry one about, as to give one a title to existence. And hence there is a handful of impertinent people, who look upon themselves as the only beings of any consequence in the universe, though, were it not for the mischief they occasion, they themselves would not deserve to be numbered with the rest of mankind. It is nevertheless solely for these people that theatrical entertainments are made. They are represented by fictitious characters in the middle of the theatre, and shew themselves in real ones on each side; they are at once persons of the drama on the stage, and comedians in the boxes. It is thus the sphere of the world and genius is contracted, while the present dramatick writers absurdly affect to introduce only characters of imaginary importance. No man is worthy of being brought upon the stage that does not wear a laced coat. A stranger would hence be apt to think France peopled only by counts and marquises, although, in fact, the more miserable and beggarly its inhabitants grow, the more splendid and brilliant is their representation on the the-

atre;

atre; and hence it is, that the ridiculous behaviour of perſons of rank, in being expoſed on the ſtage, rather gains ground than diminiſhes, and that the common people, who are ever aping the rich, go leſs to the theatre to laugh at their follies than to ſtudy them, and to become by imitation greater fools than the originals.

The French are indebted even to Moliere in a great meaſure for this evil: he corrected the courtiers by ſpoiling the citizens; and his ridiculous marquiſes were the firſt model of thoſe ſtill more contemptible petit-maitres, which ſucceeded them in the city.

There is in general much diſcourſe and but very little action on the French ſtage: the reaſon of which is, perhaps, that the French talk much more than they do, or at leaſt that they pay a much greater regard to what is ſaid than to what is done. I remember the anſwer of a ſpectator, who, in coming out from the repreſentation of one of the pieces of Dionyſius the tyrant, was aſked what he had ſeen? *I have ſeen nothing* (ſaid he) *but I have heard a deal of talk.* The ſame might be ſaid of the French plays. Racine and Corneille, with all their genius, are no more than talkers, and their ſucceſſor was the firſt of all the French poets, who, in imitation of the Engliſh, has ſometimes ventured to bring ſcenes of action on the ſtage. In common, their plays conſiſt only of witty or florid dialogues well diſpoſed; where it is obvious the chief deſign of the ſpeakers is to diſplay their talents of wit and elocution.

In

In the mean time, almoſt every ſentiment is delivered in the ſtile of a general maxim. However tranſported they may be with paſſion, they always preſerve their reſpect to the publick, of whom they think more conſtantly than of themſelves: the pieces of Racine and Moliere excepted*, egotiſm is excluded as ſcrupulouſly from the French drama, as from the writings of meſſieurs de Port-Royal; and the paſſions of the human heart never ſpeak, but with all the modeſty of chriſtian humility in the third perſon. There is beſides a certain affected dignity in theatrical diſcourſe and action, which never permits the paſſions to be expreſſed in their natural language, or ſuffers the writer to diveſt himſelf of the poet, and attend to the ſcene of action, but binds him conſtantly down to the theatre and the audience. Hence the moſt critical ſituations, the moſt intereſting circumſtances of the piece, never make him forget the niceſt arrangement of phraſe or elegancies of attitude. Should even deſpair plunge a dagger in the heart of his hero, not contented that, like Polixenes, he ſhould obſerve a decency in falling, he would not even let him fall: for the ſake of decency he is ſupported bolt upright after he is dead; and continues as erect after he expired as before.

The

* Moliere ought not to be ranked here with Racine: the firſt, indeed, abounds with maxims and ſentential obſervations, like all the others, eſpecially in his verſified pieces: but in Racine all is ſentimental; he makes every character ſpeak for the authour, and is in this point truely ſingular among all the dramatick writers of his nation.

The reaſon of all this is, that a Frenchman requires on the ſtage neither nature nor deception, but only wit and ſentiment: he requires only to be diverted, and cares not whether what he ſees be a true or falſe repreſentation of nature. Nobody here goes to the theatre for the pleaſure of ſeeing the play, but for the ſake of ſeeing, and being ſeen by the company, and to catch a ſubject for converſation after the play is over. The actor with them is always the actor, never the character he repreſents. He who gives himſelf thoſe important airs of an univerſal ſovereign is not the emperour Auguſtus, it is only Baron. The relict of Pompey is no other than Adrienne, Alzira is Mademoiſelle Gauſſin, and that formidable ſavage is no other than the civil Grandval. The comedians, on the other hand, give themſelves no trouble to keep up an illuſion which nobody expects. They place the venerable heroes of antiquity between ſix rows of young, ſpruce Pariſians: they have their Roman dreſſes made up in the French faſhion: the weeping Cornelia is ſeen bathed in tears, with her rouge laid on two fingers thick: Cato has his hair dreſſed and powdered, and Brutus ſtruts along in a Roman hoop-petticoat; yet nobody is ſhocked at all this abſurdity, nor doth it hinder the ſucceſs of the piece; for, as the actors only are ſeen in the characters, ſo what reſpects the authour is the only thing conſidered in the play, and, though propriety ſhould be entirely neglected, it is eaſily excuſed, for every one knows

knows that Corneille was no tailor, nor Crebillon a peruke-maker.

Thus, in whatever light we view this people, all is verboſity and jargon, talk without deſign, and words without meaning. In the theatre, as in the world, be as attentive as you will to what is ſaid, you will learn nothing of what is done; when a man has ſpoken, it would be thought impertinent to enquire after his conduct: he has ſpoken, that is ſufficient, and he muſt ſtand or fall by what he has ſaid. The reſpectable man here is not he that does good actions, but he that ſays good things; and a ſingle ſentence, ſometimes inadvertently uttered, ſhall caſt an odium on a man's character, which forty years of integrity will not be able to eraſe. In a word, although the conduct of men does not always reſemble their diſcourſe, yet I ſee they are characterized by their diſcourſe, without any regard to their actions: I have remaked alſo, that in a great city, ſociety appears more free, agreeable, and even more ſafe, than among people leſs knowing and leſs civilized: but I will not pretend to ſay the latter are, therefore, leſs humane, temperate, or juſt. On the contrary, among the former, where every thing is governed by appearances, the heart is perhaps more hid by external ſhow, and lies deeper concealed under agreeable deceptions. It does not, however, belong to me who am a ſtranger, without buſineſs, pleaſures, or connexions, to decide here. I begin, nevertheleſs, to perceive in myſelf that intoxication into which

ſuch

ſuch a buſy tumultuous life plunges every one who leads it; and am affected with a dizzineſs, like that of a man before whoſe eyes a multitude of ſucceſſive objects paſs with rapidity. Not one of theſe, which thus ſtrike me, affects my heart; but all together they ſo diſturb and ſuſpend its affections, that I ſometimes forget not only myſelf, but even my Eloiſa. Every day, on leaving my apartment, I leave my *obſervations* locked up behind me, and proceed to make others on the frivolous objects which preſent themſelves. Inſenſibly, I begin to think and reaſon in the manner of other people; and, if ever I ſtrive to get the better of their prejudices, and look upon things as they are, I am immediately bor'n down by a torrent of words, which carry with them a ſhow of reaſon. The people here will prove to a demonſtration, that none but ſuperficial, half-witted reaſoners regard the reality of things; that the true philoſopher conſiders only their appearances; that prejudice and prepoſſeſſion ſhould paſs for principle, decorum for law, and that the moſt profound wiſdom conſiſts in living like fools.

Thus conſtrained to pervert the order of the moral affections, to ſet a value on chimeras, and put nature and reaſon to ſilence, I ſee with regret how ſullied and defaced is that divine image which I cheriſh in my breaſt, once the ſole object of my deſires, and the only guide of my conduct: I am bor'n by one caprice to another, while my inclinations are continually enſlaved by the

the general opinion, and I am never certain one day what I ſhall approve the next.

Abaſhed and confounded to find my humanity ſo far debaſed; to ſee myſelf fallen ſo low from that innate greatneſs of mind, to which our paſſion has reciprocally elevated us, I return home at night, with a heart ſwelling, yet vacant as a ball puffed up with air; ſickened with diſguſt, and ſunk in ſorrow. But with what joy do I recollect myſelf, when alone! with what tranſports do I feel the ſenſations of love again take poſſeſſion of my heart, and reſtore me to the dignity of man! O love! how refined are thy ſenſations! how do I applaud myſelf when I ſee the image of virtue preſerve its luſtre ſtill in my breaſt! when I contemplate thine, my Eloiſa! ſtill there, unſullied, ſitting on a throne of glory, and diſſipating in a moment my gloomy deluſions. I feel my depreſſed ſoul revive; I ſeem to recover my exiſtence, to live anew, and to regain, with my love, thoſe ſublime ſentiments that render the paſſion worthy of its object.

LETTER LXXXII.

FROM ELOISA.

I Am juſt returned, my dear friend, from the enjoyment of one of the moſt delightful ſights I ſhall ever behold. The moſt prudent, the moſt amiable girl in the world is at length become

the

the moſt deſerving, the beſt of women. The worthy man, to whom ſhe has given her hand, lives only to revere, to cheriſh, to make her happy; and I feel that inexpreſſible pleaſure of being a witneſs to the happineſs of my friend, and of ſharing it with her: nor will you, I am convinced, partake of it leſs than myſelf; you, for whom ſhe had always the tendereſt eſteem, who were dear to her almoſt from her infancy, and have received from her obligations which ſhould render her yet more dear to you. Yes, we will ſympathiſe with all her ſenſations; if to her they give pleaſure, they ſhall afford us conſolation; for, ſo great is the value of that friendſhip which unites us, that the happineſs of either of the three is ſufficient to moderate the afflictions of the other two. Let us not, however, too highly felicitate ourſelves; our incomparable friend is going in ſome meaſure to forſake us. She is now entered on a new ſcene of life, is bound by new engagements, and become ſubject to new obligations. Her heart, which once was only our's, will now find room for other affections; to which friendſhip muſt give place. We ought, therefore, my friend, to be more ſcrupulous hereafter in the ſervices we impoſe on her zeal; we ought not only to conſult the ſincerity of her attachment, and the need we have of her ſervice, but what may with propriety be required in her preſent ſituation; what may be agreeable or diſpleaſing to her huſband. We have no buſineſs to enquire what virtue demands in ſuch

a caſe

a caſe, the laws of friendſhip are ſufficient. He who for his own ſake could expoſe his friend deſerves not to have one. When our's was unmarried, ſhe was at liberty; ſhe had nobody to call her to account for her conduct, and the uprightneſs of her intentions was ſufficient to juſtify her to herſelf. She conſidered us as man and wife deſtined for each other; and her chaſte yet ſuſceptible heart, uniting a due regard for herſelf to the moſt tender compaſſion for her culpable friend, ſhe concealed my fault without abetting it; but at preſent, circumſtances are changed; and ſhe is juſtly accountable to the man to whom ſhe has not only plighted her vows, but reſigned her liberty. She is now entruſted not only with her own honour, but with that of her huſband; and it is not enough that ſhe is virtuous, her virtue muſt be reſpected, and her conduct approved: ſhe muſt not only *deſerve* the eſteem of her huſband, but ſhe muſt *obtain* it: if he blames her, ſhe is to blame: and though ſhe be innocent, ſhe is in the wrong the moment ſhe is ſuſpected; for to ſtudy appearances is an indiſpenſable part of her duty.

I cannot determine preciſely how far I am right in my judgement; I leave that to you: but there is a monitor within that tells me it is not right my couſin ſhould continue to be my confident; not that ſhe ſhould be the firſt to tell me ſo. I may be frequently miſtaken in my arguments, but I am convinced I am al-

ways right in the ſenſations on which they are founded; and this makes me confide more in thoſe ſenſations than on the deductions of my reaſon.

From this conſideration I have already formed a pretence to get back your letters, which, for fear of a ſurpriſe, I had put into her hands. She returned them with an oppreſſion of heart which that of mine made me eaſily perceive, and which convinced me I had acted as I ought. We entered into no explanation, but our looks were ſufficiently expreſſive; ſhe embraced me, and burſt into tears: the tender ſenſibility of friendſhip hath little occaſion for the aſſiſtance of language.

With reſpect to the future addreſs of your letters, I thought immediately of my little Anet, as the ſafeſt; but if this young woman be inferiour in rank to my couſin, is that a reaſon we ſhould leſs regard her virtue? Have I not reaſon, on the contrary, to fear my example may be more dangerous to one of leſs elevated ſentiments; that what was only an effort of the ſublimeſt friendſhip in one, may be the firſt ſtep to corruption in the other; and that in abuſing her gratitude, I may make virtue itſelf ſubſervient to the promotion of vice? Is it not enough, alas! for me to be culpable, without ſeducing accomplices, and aggravating my own crime, by involving others in my guilt? Of this, therefore, no more: I have hit on another expedient, leſs ſafe indeed, but leſs exceptionable, as it lays nobody

nobody open to cenſure, nor requires a confident. It is for you to write to me under a fictitious name: as for example, that of M. Boſquet, and to ſend you letters under cover addreſſed to Regianino, whom I ſhall take care to inſtruct. Thus Regianino himſelf may know nothing of our correſpondence, or at moſt can only form ſuſpicions, which he dares not confirm; for Lord B——, on whoſe favour he depends, has anſwered for his fidelity. In the mean time, while our correſpondence is maintained by this means, I will try if it be poſſible to reſume the method we made uſe of in your voyage to the Valois, or ſome other that may be durable and ſafe.

There is ſomething in the turn and ſtile of your letters, that would convince me, were I even unacquainted with the ſtate of your heart, that the life you lead at Paris is in no wiſe agreeable to your inclinations. The letters of Muralt, of which they ſo loudly complain in France, are even leſs ſatirical and ſevere than your's. Like a child that is angry with its tutors, you revenge the diſagreeable neceſſity you are under of ſtudying the world upon your firſt teachers.

What I am ſurpriſed at the moſt, however, is, that the very circumſtance which uſually prejudices foreigners in favour of the French ſhould give you diſguſt. I mean their polite reception of ſtrangers, and their general turn of converſation; though by your own confeſſion, you

have met with great civility. I have not forgot your diſtinction between Paris in particular, and great cities in general; but I ſee plainly, that, without knowing preciſely what belongs to either, you cenſure without conſidering whether it be truth or ſlander. But however this be, the French are my favourites, and you don't at all oblige me in reviling them. It is to the many excellent writings France has produced, that I am indebted for moſt of thoſe leſſons by which we have together profited. If Switzerland is emerged from its ancient barbarity, to whom is it obliged? The two greateſt and moſt virtuous men in modern ſtory, Catinat and Fenelon, were both Frenchmen. Henry the Fourth, the good king, whoſe character I admire, was a Frenchman. If France be not the country of liberty, it is properly that of *men*; a ſuperiour advantage in the eyes of a philoſopher to that of licentious freedom. Hoſpitable protectors of the ſtranger, the French overlook real inſult, and a man would be pelted in London for ſaying half ſo much againſt the Engliſh, as the French will bear at Paris. My father, who hath ſpent the greateſt part of his life in France, never ſpeaks but with rapture of this agreeable people.

If he has ſpilt his blood in the ſervice of its king, he has not been forgotten in his retirement, but is ſtill honoured by royal beneficence. Hence, I think myſelf in ſome degree intereſted in the glory of a nation, to which that of my father is indebted. If the people of all countries, my

my friend, have their good and ill qualities, you ought ſurely to pay the ſame regard to that impartiality which praiſes, as to that which blames them.

To be more particular with you, I will aſk you why you throw away in idle viſits the time you are to ſpend at Paris? Is not Paris a theatre wherein great talents may be diſplayed as well as London? And do ſtrangers find more difficulties in the way to reputation in the former, than they do in the latter? Believe me, all the Engliſh are not like Lord B——, nor do all the French reſemble thoſe fine talkers that give you ſo much diſguſt. Try, put them to the proof, though it be only to acquire a more intimate acquaintance with their manners; and judge of people that you own ſpeak ſo well by their deeds. My couſin's father ſays you know the conſtitution of the empire, and the intereſts of princes. My Lord B—— acknowledges alſo, that you are well verſed in the principles of politicks, and the various ſyſtems of government; and I have got it into my head that of all countries in the world you will ſucceed beſt in that where merit is moſt eſteemed, and that you want only to be known, to be honourably employed. As to your religion's being an obſtacle, why ſhould your's be more ſo than another's? Is not good ſenſe a ſecurity againſt fanaticiſm and perſecution? Does bigotry prevail more in France than in Germany? And is there any thing that ſhould hinder your ſucceeding at

Paris, as M. St. Saphorin has done at Vienna? If you conſider the end, the more ſpeedy your attempts, the ſooner may you promiſe yourſelf ſucceſs. If you balance the means, it is certainly more reputable for a man to advance himſelf by his own abilities, than to be obliged for preferment to his friends. But, if you purpoſe a longer voyage——ah! that *ſea!*——I ſhould like England better if it lay on this ſide Paris——But, a-propos, now I talk of Paris, may I venture to take notice of another piece of affectation I have remarked in your letters? How comes it that you, who ſpoke to me ſo freely of the women of this country, ſay nothing about the Pariſian ladies? Can thoſe celebrated and polite females be leſs worth your deſcription, than the ſimple and unpoliſhed inhabitants of the mountains? Or are you apprehenſive of giving me uneaſineſs by a picture of the moſt charming and ſeductive creatures in the univerſe? If this be the caſe, my friend, undeceive yourſelf, and reſt aſſured, that the worſt thing you can do for my repoſe is to ſay nothing about them; and that, however you might praiſe them, your ſilence in that reſpect is more ſuſpicious than would be your higheſt encomiums. I ſhall be glad alſo to have ſome little account of the opera at Paris, of which they relate ſuch wonders*; for after all, the muſick may be bad, and

* I ſhould have but a bad opinion of the reader's ſagacity, who, knowing the character and ſituation of Eloiſa, ſhould think this piece of curioſity her's. It will be ſeen hereafter

and yet the repreſentation have its beauties; but if not, it will at leaſt afford a ſubject for your criticiſm, which will offend nobody.

I know not whether it be worth while to tell you, that my couſin's wedding produces me two ſuitors: they met here a few days ago; one of them from Yverdun, hunting all the way from caſtle to caſtle, and the other from Germany, in the ſtage-coach from Berne. The firſt is a kind of ſmart, that ſpeaks loud and peremptory enough to make his repartees paſs for wit, among thoſe who attend only to his manner. The other is a great baſhful ſimpleton, whoſe timidity, however, is not of that amiable kind which ariſes from the fear of diſpleaſing: but is owing to the embarraſſment of a blockhead, who knows not what to ſay, and the aukwardneſs of a libertine, who is at a loſs how to behave himſelf in the company of modeſt women. As I well know the intentions of my father in regard to theſe two gentlemen, I took, with pleaſure, the freedom he gave me, of treating them agreeably to my own humour, which, I believe, is ſuch as will ſoon get the better of that which brought them hither. I hate them for their preſumption, in pretending to a heart which is your's, without the leaſt merit to diſpute it with you; yet if they had ever ſo much, I ſhould hate them the more: but where could they acquire it? They or any other man in the univerſe? No, my dear friend,

hereafter that her lover knew to whom to attribute it. If he could have been deceived in this point, he had not deſerved the name of a lover.

reſt ſatisfied, it is impoſſible. Nay, where it poſſible that another ſhould be poſſeſſed of equal merit, or even that another *you* ſhould attack my heart, I ſhould never liſten to any but the firſt. Be not uneaſy, therefore, at theſe two animals, which I have with regret condeſcended to mention. What pleaſure ſhould I have in being able to give them both ſuch equal portions of diſguſt, as that they ſhould reſolve to depart both together as they came!

M. de Crouſaz has lately given us a refutation of the Ethick epiſtles of Mr. Pope, which I have read, but it did not pleaſe me. I will not take upon me to ſay which of theſe two authours is in the right, but I am conſcious that the book of the former will never excite the reader to do any one virtuous action, while our zeal for every thing great and good is awakened by that of Pope. For my own part, I have no other rule by which to judge of what I read than that of conſulting the diſpoſitions in which I riſe up from my book, nor can I well conceive what ſort of merit any piece has to boaſt, the reading of which leaves no benevolent impreſſion behind it, nor ſtimulates the reader to any thing that is virtuous and good*.

Adieu, my dear friend, I would not finiſh my letter ſo ſoon, but am called away. I leave you with regret, for I am at preſent in a chearful diſpoſition, and I love you ſhould partake

* If the reader approves of this criterion, and makes uſe of it to judge of this work, I will not appeal from his *dgement, whatever it* prove.

take of my happineſs. The cauſe which now inſpires it is, that my dear mother is much better within theſe few days; ſhe has, indeed, found herſelf ſo well as to be preſent at the wedding, and to give away her niece, or rather her other daughter. Poor Clara wept for joy to ſee her; and I——but you may judge of my ſenſations, who, deſerving her ſo little, hourly tremble at the thoughts of loſing her. In fact, ſhe did the honours of the table, and acquitted herſelf on the occaſion with as good a grace as if ſhe had been in perfect health. Nay, it ſeemed to me that ſome remains of languor in her diſpoſition rendered her elegant complacences ſtill more affecting. Never did this incomparable parent appear ſo good, ſo charming, ſo worthy to be revered!—Do you know that ſhe aſked Mr. Orbe concerning you ſeveral times? Although ſhe never ſpeaks of you to me, I am not ignorant of her eſteem for you; and that if ever ſhe were conſulted, your happineſs and mine would be her firſt concern. Ah! my friend, if your heart can be truely grateful, you owe her many, many obligations!

LETTER LXXXIV.

TO ELOISA.

WELL, my Eloiſa, ſcold me, quarrel with me, beat me; I will endure every thing, but will not ceaſe to acquaint you with my thoughts. Who ſhould be the depoſitory of

thoſe ſentiments you have enlightened, and with whom ſhould my heart converſe, if you refuſe to hear me? I give you an account of the obſervations I have made, and of my own opinions, not ſo much for your approbation, as correction; and the more liable I am to fall into errour the more punctual I ſhould be in my application to your judgement. If I cenſure the manners of the people in this great city, I do not ſeek to be juſtified for taking this liberty, becauſe I write to you in confidence; for I never ſay any thing of a third perſon, which I would not aver to his face; and all I write to you concerning the Pariſians, is no more than a repetition of what I daily advance in converſation with themſelves: however, they are not diſpleaſed with me, and they even join with me in many particulars. They complain of our *Muralt*: I am perſuaded, they ſee, and are convinced, how much he hated them, even in his panegyricks: but I am much miſtaken, if in my criticiſm they do not perceive the contrary. The eſteem and gratitude their generoſity inſpires ſerve to increaſe my freedom: it may be ſerviceable to ſome of them; and, if I may judge from their manner of receiving truth from my lips, they do not think me below their regard. When this is the caſe, my Eloiſa, true cenſure is more laudable than even true praiſe; for that only ſerves to corrupt the heart of thoſe on whom it is beſtowed, and there are none ſo eager to obtain it as the moſt worthleſs; on the contrary, cenſure may be uſeful, and

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can only be endured by the moſt deſerving. I ſincerely own, I honour the French as the only people in the world who really love their fellow-creatures, and who are naturally benevolent; but, for this very reaſon, I am leſs inclined to grant them that general admiration they ſeem to expect, even for the faults they acknowledge. If the French had no virtues, I ſhould not mention them; if they had no vices, they would not be men: they have too many excellent qualities for indiſcriminate praiſe.

As to the attempts you mention, they are impracticable, becauſe I ſhould be obliged to uſe means which are not only inconvenient, but which you have alſo interdicted. Republican auſterity is not in vogue here; they need more flexible virtues, which are more eaſily adapted to the intereſt of their friends and patrons. They reſpect merit, I confeſs; but the talents that acquire reputation are very different from thoſe which lead to fortune; and, if I am ſo unfortunate as to poſſeſs the latter only, will Eloiſa conſent to become the wife of an adventurer? In England it is quite the contrary; and though their manners are perhaps leſs refined than in France, yet they riſe to fortune by more honourable ſteps, becauſe the people having more ſhare in the government publick eſteem is of more conſequence. You are not ignorant of what Lord B—— propoſed to do for me, and of my intention to juſtify his zeal. I can have no objection to any ſpot on the globe except its di-

ſtance from you. O, Eloiſa! if it is difficult to procure your hand, it is ſtill more difficult to deſerve ſo great a bleſſing, and yet, methinks, it is a noble taſk.

The account you give of your mother's health relieved me from the greateſt anxiety. I perceived your diſtreſs, even before my departure, and therefore I durſt not expreſs my fears; but I thought her ſo changed, that I was apprehenſive ſhe would fall into ſome dangerous illneſs. Be careful of her, becauſe ſhe is dear to me, becauſe my heart reveres her, becauſe all my hopes are centered in her goodneſs, and becauſe ſhe is the mother of my Eloiſa.

As for the two ſuitors, I own, I do not like to hear of them, even in jeſt; but the manner in which you mention them expels my fears, and I will no longer hate theſe unfortunate pretenders, ſince you imagine they are hated by you: yet I admire your ſimplicity in believing yourſelf capable of hatred. Don't you perceive that what you take for hatred is nothing more than the impatience of inſulted love? thus anxious mourns the amorous turtle when its beloved mate is in danger of being caught. No, Eloiſa; no, incomparable maid! when you are capable of hatred, I may ceaſe to love you.

P. S.—Beſet by two importunate rivals! How I pity you! for your own ſake, haſten their diſmiſſion.

LETTER

LETTER LXXXV.

FROM ELOISA.

I Have delivered into Mr. Orbe's hands a packet, which he has engaged to forward to M. Silveſter, from whom you will receive it; but I caution you, my dear friend, not to open it till you retire into your own chamber, and are quite alone. You will find in this packet a ſmall trinket for your particular uſe.

It is a kind of charm which lovers gladly wear. The manner of uſing it is very whimſical. It muſt be contemplated for a quarter of an hour every morning, or until it ſoftens the ſpectator into a certain degree of tenderneſs. It is then applied to the eyes, the mouth, and next to the heart; and it is generally eſteemed the beſt preſervative againſt the noxious air of a country infected with gallantry. They even attribute an electrical quality to theſe taliſmans, which is very ſingular, but which acts only upon faithful lovers. They ſay it communicates the impreſſion of kiſſes from one to the other, though at the diſtance of a hundred leagues. I do not pretend to warrant the ſucceſs of this charm from experience; only, this I know, it is your own fault if you do not put it to the proof.

Calm your fears with regard to my two gallants, or pretenders, call them which you pleaſe. They are gone: peace be with them! I ſhall no longer hate them, ſince they are out of my ſight.

LETTER

LETTER LXXXVI.

TO ELOISA.

AND ſo, my Eloiſa, you inſiſt on a deſcription of theſe Pariſian ladies? Vain girl! but it is a homage due to your charms. Notwithſtanding all your affected jealouſy, your modeſty, and your love, I have diſcovered more vanity than fear diſguiſed under this curioſity. Be it as it will, I ſhall be juſt; I may ſafely ſpeak the truth, but I ſhould undertake the taſk with better ſpirits if I had more to praiſe. Why are they not a hundred times more lovely! Would they had ſufficient charms to reflect new excellence upon your's by the compariſon!

You complain of my ſilence: good heaven! what could I have written? When you have read this letter, you will perceive why I take pleaſure in ſpeaking of your neighbours, the Valeſian ladies, and why I have hitherto neglected to mention thoſe of this country: the firſt continually remind me of you, my Eloiſa; but the others—read, and you will know. Few people think of the French ladies as I do, if, indeed, I am not quite ſingular in my opinion. Equity obliges me, therefore, to give you this hint, that you may ſuppoſe I delineate them, perhaps, not as they are in reality, but as they appear to me. Nevertheleſs, if I am not juſt in my deſcription, I know you will cenſure me; and then will your injuſtice be greater than mine, becauſe the fault is entirely your own.

Let

Let us begin [illegible] greatest [illegible] should I [illegible] this [illegible] satisfied [illegible] as an [illegible] other is [illegible] unjust to [illegible] Their [illegible] and in general [illegible] yet there are [illegible] rather than [illegible] embrace the [illegible] but I [illegible] are foolish [illegible] though [illegible] they have [illegible]

Their [illegible] free and [illegible] straint; but they [illegible] which, [illegible] grace, they [illegible] of absurdity. [illegible] fair, and they are [illegible] not in the least [illegible] in regard to their [illegible] they are in the opposite extreme to the Valesians. Conscious of this defect they endeavour to supply it by art; nor are they less scrupulous of borrowing an artificial whiteness. Though I have never seen these [illegible] but at a distance, they expose so much of [illegible]

* Freedom, ease.

ſelves, that they leave the ſpectators very little room for conjecture. In this caſe, the ladies ſeem not to underſtand their own intereſt; for if the face is but moderately handſome, the imagination heightens every concealed charm, and, according to the Gaſcon philoſopher, there is no appetite ſo ſtrong as that which was never ſatisfied, eſpecially in this ſenſe.

Their features are not very regular, but they have ſomething in their countenance which ſupplies the place of beauty, and which is ſometimes much more agreeable. Their eyes are quick and ſparkling, yet they are neither penetrating nor ſweet: they ſtrive to animate them by the help of *rouge*, but the expreſſion they acquire by this means has more of anger in it than love; nature has given them ſprightlineſs only; and though they ſometimes ſeem to ſollicit tenderneſs they never promiſe a return*.

They have acquired ſo great a reputation for their judgement in dreſs, that they are patterns to all Europe. Indeed, it is impoſſible to adapt ſuch abſurd faſhions with more taſte. They are, of all women, the leaſt under ſubjection to their own modes. Faſhion governs in the provinces, but the Pariſians govern faſhion, and every one of them is ſkilled in ſuiting it to her own advantage: the firſt are ignorant and ſervile plagiariſts, who copy even orthographical errours; the latter are like authours, who imitate with judgement

* Speak for yourſelf, my dear philoſopher, others may have been more happy. A coquet only promiſes to every *body what ſhe ſhould* reſerve but for one.

judgement, and have abilities to correct the miſtakes of their original.

Their apparel is more uncommon than magnificent, more elegant than rich. The rapid ſucceſſion of their faſhions renders them old and obſolete even from one year to another: that neatneſs which induces them to change their dreſs ſo frequently, preſerves them from much ridiculous magnificence; they do not, however, ſpend leſs money on that account, but their expenſes are, by this means, better conducted. They differ greatly in this particular from the Italians; inſtead of ſuperb trimmings and embroidery, their clothes are always plain and new. Both ſexes obſerve the ſame moderation and delicacy, which is extremely pleaſing: for my part, I like to ſee a coat neither laced nor ſoiled. There is no nation in the world, except our own, where the people, eſpecially the women, wear leſs gold and ſilver. The ſame kind of ſtuffs are worn by people of all ranks, ſo that it would be difficult to diſtinguiſh a ducheſs from a citizen, if the firſt had not ſome marks of diſtinction which the other dares not imitate. But this ſeems to have its inconveniences, for whatever is the faſhion at court is immediately followed in the city, and you never ſee in Paris, as in other countries, a beau or belle of the laſt age. Nevertheleſs, it is not here as in moſt other places, where the people of the higheſt rank, being alſo the richeſt, the women of faſhion diſtinguiſh themſelves by a degree of luxury which

cannot

cannot be equalled. Had the ladies of the court of France attempted this kind of diſtinction, they would very ſoon have been eclipſed by the wives of the citizens.

What then do you think was their reſource? why they took a much more effectual method, and which required more abilities: they knew that the minds of the people were deeply impreſſed with a ſenſe of baſhfulneſs and modeſty. This ſuggeſted to them faſhions not to be eaſily imitated. They perceived that the people could not endure the thoughts of *rouge*, and that they obſtinately perſiſted in calling it by the vulgar name of paint, and therefore they daubed their cheeks, not with paint, but with *rouge*; for change but the name, and it is no longer the ſame thing. They alſo perceived that a bare neck was ſcandalous in the eyes of the publick, and for that reaſon they choſe to enlarge the ſcene. They ſaw — many things, which my Eloiſa, young as ſhe is, will never ſee. In their manners they are governed exactly by the ſame principle. That charming diffidence which diſtinguiſhes and adorns the ſex, they deſpiſe as ignoble and vile; they animate their actions and diſcourſe with a noble aſſurance, and, I am confident, they would look any modeſt man out of countenance. Thus they ceaſe to be women, to avoid being confounded with the vulgar; they prefer their rank to their ſex, and imitate women of pleaſure, that they themſelves may be above imitation.

I know

I know not how far they may have carried *their* imitation, but I am certain they have not ſucceeded in their deſign to prevent it in others. As to *rouge*, and the faſhion of diſplaying thoſe charms which they ought to conceal, they have made all the progreſs poſſible. The ladies of the city had much rather renounce their natural complexion, and the charms they might borrow from the *amoroſo penſier** of their lovers, than preſerve the appearance of what they are: and if this example has not prevailed among the lower ſort of people, it is only becauſe they are afraid of being inſulted by the populace; and thus are an infinite number of women kept within the bounds of decency, by the fear of offending the delicacy of the mob. Their maſculine air, and dragoon-like deportment, is leſs ſtriking becauſe ſo univerſal; it is conſpicuous only to ſtrangers. From one end of this metropolis to the other there is ſcarce a woman whoſe appearance is not ſufficiently bold to diſconcert any man who has never been accuſtomed to the like in his own country; from this aſtoniſhment proceeds that aukward confuſion which they attribute to all ſtrangers, and which increaſes the moment they open their lips. They have not the ſweet voice of their country-women; their accent is hoarſe, ſharp, interrogative, imperious, jibing, and louder than that of a man. If in the tone of their voice they retain any thing feminine, it is entirely loſt in the impertinence of their manner.

They

* Amorous imagination.

They ſeem to enjoy the baſhful confuſion of every foreigner; but it would probably give them leſs pleaſure, if they were acquainted with its true cauſe.

Whether it be, that I, in particular, am prejudiced in favour of beauty, or whether the power of beauty may not univerſally influence the judgement, I know not; but the handſomeſt women appear to me rather the moſt decent in their dreſs, and in general behave with the greateſt modeſty. They loſe nothing by this reſerve; conſcious of their advantages, they know they have no need of borrowed allurements to attract our admiration. It may be alſo, that imprudence is more intolerably diguſting when joined with uglineſs; for certainly I ſhould much ſooner be tempted to affront an impertinent ugly woman, than to embrace her; whereas, by modeſty ſhe might excite even a tender compaſſion, which is often a harbinger of love. But though it is generally remarked, that the prettieſt women are the beſt behaved, yet they are often ſo extremely affected, and are always ſo evidently taken up with themſelves, that, in this country, there is little danger of being expoſed to that temptation which M. de Muralt ſometimes experienced amongſt the Engliſh ladies, of telling a woman ſhe was handſome, only for the pleaſure of perſuading her to think ſo.

Neither the natural gaiety of the French, nor their love of ſingularity, is the cauſe of this freedom of converſation and behaviour for which theſe

theſe ladies are ſo remarkable; but it is rather to be deduced from their manners, by which they are authoriſed to ſpend all their time in the company of men; and hence it is, that the behaviour of each ſex ſeems to be copied from the other.

Our Swiſs ladies, on the contrary, are fond of little female aſſemblies, in which they are extremely ſocial and happy*; for, though they probably may not diſlike the company of men, yet it is certain their preſence is ſome conſtraint upon them.

In Paris it is quite the reverſe; the women are never eaſy nor ſatisfied without the men. In moſt companies the lady of the houſe is ſeen alone amidſt a circle of gentlemen, and this is ſo generally the caſe, that one cannot help wondering how ſuch an unequal proportion of men can be every where aſſembled. But Paris is full of *aventuriers*, prieſts, and abbés, who ſpend their whole lives in running from houſe to houſe. Thus the women learn to think, act, and ſpeak from the men, whilſt theſe, in return, imbibe a certain degree of effeminacy; and this ſeems the only conſequence of their trifling gallantry; however, they enjoy a fulſome adoration, in which their devotees do not think it worth while to preſerve even the appearance of ſincerity. No matter: in the midſt of her circle every woman

* Things are changed ſince that time. By many circumſtances one would ſuppoſe theſe letters to have been written above twenty years ago; but by their ſtile, and the manners they deſcribe, one would conclude them to be of the laſt century.

woman is the ſole object of attention, and that is ſufficient. But if a ſecond female enters the room, familiarity inſtantly gives place to ceremony, the high airs of quality are aſſumed, the adoration becomes divided, and each continues to be a ſecret conſtraint upon the other till the company breaks up.

The Pariſian ladies are fond of publick diverſions; that is, they are fond of ſhowing themſelves in publick; but the great difficulty, every time they go, is to find a female companion; for decorum will not allow one lady alone to appear in the boxes, even though attended by her huſband, or by any other man. It is amazing, in this very ſocial country, how difficult it is to form theſe parties; out of ten that are propoſed nine generally miſcarry: they are projected by the deſire of being ſeen, and are broken by the diſagreeable neceſſity for a ſiſter petticoat. I ſhould imagine it an eaſy matter for the ladies to aboliſh this ridiculous cuſtom. What reaſon can there be why a woman ſhould not be ſeen alone in publick? perhaps, there being no reaſon for it, is the very cauſe of its continuance. However, upon the whole, it may be prudent to preſerve decency where the abolition would be attended with no great ſatisfaction. What great matter would there be in the privilege of appearing alone at the opera? Is it not much better to reſerve this excluſive privilege for the private reception of one's friends in one's own houſe?

Nothing

Nothing can be more certain, than that this cuſtom of being alone amidſt ſuch a number of men is productive of many ſecret connexions: indeed, the world is pretty well convinced of it, ſince experience has proved the abſurdity of that maxim which told us, that by multiplying temptations we ſhould deſtroy them; ſo that they do not defend this faſhion for its decency, but becauſe it is moſt agreeable; which, by-the-by, I do not believe. How can any love exiſt where modeſty is held in deriſion? and what pleaſure can there be in a life which is at once deprived both of love and decency? but as the want of entertainment is the greateſt evil which theſe ſlaves to diſſipation have to fear, the ladies are ſollicitous for amuſement rather than love; gallantry and attendance is all they require; and provided their danglers are aſſiduous, they are very indifferent about the violence or ſincerity of their paſſion. The words *love* and *lover* are entirely baniſhed even from the moſt private intercourſe of the ſexes, and ſunk into oblivion with the *darts* and *flames* of ancient romance.

One would imagine that the whole order of natural ſenſations was here reverſed. A girl is to have no feelings, paſſions, or attachments; that privilege is reſerved for the married women, and excludes no paramour except their huſbands. The mother had better have twenty lovers, than her daughter one. Adultery is conſidered as no crime, and conveys no indecency in the idea: their romances, which are univerſally

verſally read for inſtruction, are full of it; and there appears nothing ſhocking in its conſequences, provided the lovers do not render themſelves contemptible by their fidelity. O Eloiſa! there are many women in this city who have defiled their marriage-bed a hundred times, yet would preſume, with the voice of impurity, to ſlander an union like our's, that is yet unſullied with infidelity.

It ſhould ſeem, that in Paris marriage is a different inſtitution from what it is in other parts of the world: they call it a ſacrament, and yet it has not half the power of a common contract. It appears to be nothing more than a private agreement between two perſons to live together, to bear the ſame name, and acknowledge the ſame children; but who, in other reſpects, have no authority one over the other. If at Paris a man ſhould pretend to be offended with the ill conduct of his wife, he would be as generally deſpiſed, as if, in our country, he was to take no notice of her ſcandalous behaviour. Nor are the ladies on their parts leſs indulgent to their huſbands; for I have not yet heard of an inſtance of their being puniſhed for having imitated the infidelity of their wives. In ſhort, what other effect can be expected from an union in which their hearts were never conſulted? thoſe who marry fortune or title ſeem to be under no perſonal obligation.

Love, even love, has loſt its privilege, and is no leſs degenerated than marriage. As man

and

and wife may be looked upon as a bachelor and a maid, who live together for the ſake of enjoying more liberty; ſo are lovers a kind of people, who, with great indifference, meet for amuſement, through cuſtom, or out of vanity. The heart is entirely unconcerned in theſe attachments, in which nothing more than certain external conveniences are ever conſulted: is, in ſhort, to know each other, to dine together, now-and-then to exchange a few words, or, if poſſible, even leſs than this. An affair of gallantry laſts but a little longer than a viſit, and conſiſts chiefly in a few genteel converſations, and three or four pretty letters, filled with deſcriptions, maxims, philoſophy, and wit. As to experimental philoſophy, it does not require ſo much myſtery; they have wiſely diſcovered the folly of letting ſlip any opportunity of gratification: whether it happens to be the lover or any other man, a man is a man, and why ſhould a lady be more ſcrupulous of being guilty of an infidelity to her lover than to her huſband? After a certain age they may all be conſidered as the ſame kind of puppets, made up by the ſame faſhion-monger, and conſequently the firſt that comes to hand is always the beſt.

Knowing nothing of theſe matters from experience, I can relate only what I have heard; and indeed, the repreſentation is ſo very extraordinary, that I have but an imperfect idea of what I have been told. That which I chiefly comprehend is, that the gallant is generally re-

garded as one of the family; that if the lady happens to be diſſatisfied with him, he is diſmiſſed, or if he meets with a ſervice more to his inclination or advantage, he takes his leave, and ſhe engages a freſh one. There are, I have been told, ſome ladies ſo capricious as even to take up with their own huſbands for a while, conſidering them, at leaſt, as a kind of male creature; but this whim ſeldom laſts long: as ſoon as it is paſt, the good man is entirely diſcarded, or, if he ſhould happen to be obſtinate, why then ſhe takes another, and keeps them both.

But I could not help objecting to the perſon who gave me this ſtrange account, how it was poſſible, after this, to live among theſe diſcarded lovers? "Live among them (ſays he;) why they are entire ſtrangers to her ever after; and if they ſhould, by chance, take it into their heads to renew their amours, they would have to begin anew, and would hardly be able to recollect their former acquaintance."—"I underſtand you (ſaid I) but I have ſome difficulty in reconciling theſe extravagancies. I cannot conceive, how it is poſſible, after ſuch a tender union, to ſee each other without emotion; how the heart can avoid palpitation, even at the name of a perſon once beloved; why they do not tremble when they meet."—"You make me laugh (ſays he) with your tremblings; and ſo you would have our ladies continually fainting away."

Suppreſs

Suppreſs a part of this caricaturé repreſentation; place my Eloiſa in oppoſition to the reſt, and remember the ſincerity of my heart—I have nothing more to add.

However, I muſt confeſs, that many of theſe diſagreeable impreſſions are effaced by cuſtom. Though the dark ſide of their character may firſt catch our attention, it is no reaſon why we ſhould be blind to their amiable qualities. The charms of their underſtanding and good humour are no ſmall addition to their perſonal accompliſhments. Our firſt repugnance overcome, frequently generates a contrary ſentiment. It is not juſt to view the picture only in its worſt point of ſight.

The firſt inconveniency of great cities is, that mankind are generally diſguiſed, and that in ſociety they appear different from what they really are. This is particularly true in Paris with regard to the ladies, who derive from the obſervation of others the only exiſtence about which they are ſollicitous. When you meet a lady in publick, inſtead of ſeeing a Pariſian, as you imagine, you behold only a phantom of the faſhion: her ſtature, dimenſion, gait, ſhape, neck, colour, air, look, language, every thing is aſſumed; ſo that, if you were to ſee her in her natural ſtate, you would not know her to be the ſame creature. But this univerſal maſk is greatly to her diſadvantage; for nature's ſubſtitutes are always inferior to herſelf: beſides, it is almoſt impoſſible to conceal her entirely; in

ſpite of us, ſhe will now-and-then diſcover herſelf, and in ſeiſing her with dexterity conſiſts the true art of obſervation. This is, indeed, no difficult matter in converſing with the women of this country; for, if you take them off their grand theatre of repreſentation, and conſider them attentively, you will ſee them as they really are, and it is then poſſible that your averſion may be changed into eſteem and friendſhip.

I had an opportunity of verifying this remark laſt week, on a party of pleaſure, to which, along with ſome other ſtrangers, I was, abruptly enough, invited by a company of ladies, probably with a deſign to laugh at us without conſtraint or interruption. The firſt day the project ſucceeded to their wiſh: they immediately began to dart their wit and pleaſantry in ſhowers, but as their arrows were not retorted their quivers were ſoon empty. They then behaved with great decency, and finding themſelves unable to bring us to *their* ſtyle, they were obliged to conform to our's. Whether they were pleaſed with it or not I am ignorant; however, the change was very agreeable to me, for I ſoon found that I ſtood a better chance to profit by the converſation of theſe females than from the generality of men. Their wit now appeared ſo great an ornament to their natural good ſenſe, that I changed my opinion of the ſex, and could not help lamenting, that ſo many amiable women ſhould want reaſon, only becauſe it is their humour to reject it. I perceived alſo that their natural

natural graces began inſenſibly to efface the artificial airs of the city: for, without deſign, our manner is generally influenced by the nature of our diſcourſe: it is impoſſible to introduce much coquettiſh grimace in a rational converſation. They appeared much more handſome after they grew indifferent about it, and I perceived, that if they pleaſed they need only throw off their affectation. Hence, I am apt to conclude, that Paris, the pretended ſeat of taſte, is of all places in the world that in which there is the leaſt, ſince all their methods of pleaſing are deſtructive of real beauty.

Thus we continued together four or five days, ſatisfied with each other, and with ourſelves. Inſtead of ſatiriſing Paris and its innumerable follies, we forgot both the city and its inhabitants. Our whole care was to promote the happineſs of our little ſociety. We wanted no ill-natured wit or ſarcaſm to excite our mirth; but our laughter, like your couſin's, was the effect of good humour.

I had yet another reaſon to be confirmed in my good opinion of theſe females. Frequently, in the very midſt of our enjoyment, a perſon would come in abruptly, and whiſper the lady of the houſe. She left the room, ſhut herſelf up in her cloſet, and continued writing a conſiderable time. It was natural to ſuppoſe, that her heart was engaged in this correſpondence; and of this one of the company gave a hint, which, however, was not very graciouſly received: a

proof at leaſt, that though ſhe might poſſibly have no lovers, ſhe was not without friends. But, judge of my ſurpriſe, when I was informed that theſe ſuppoſed Pariſian ſuitors were no other than the unhappy peaſants of the pariſh, who came in their diſtreſs to implore the protection of their lady; one being unjuſtly taxed, another enrolled in the militia, regardleſs of his age and family, a third groaning under a law-ſuit with a powerful neighbour, a fourth ruined by a ſtorm of hail was going to be dragged to priſon. In ſhort, each had ſome petition to make, each was patiently heard; and the time we ſuppoſed to be ſpent in an amorous correſpondence was employed in writing letters in favour of theſe unhappy ſufferers. It is impoſſible to conceive how I was aſtoniſhed to find with what delight, and with how little oſtentation, this young, this gay woman, performed theſe charitable offices of humanity. Were ſhe even an Eloiſa, thought I, ſhe could not act otherwiſe! From that moment I continued to regard her with reſpect, and all her faults vaniſhed.

My enquiries had no ſooner taken this turn, than I began to diſcover a thouſand advantageous particulars in the very women who before appeared ſo unſupportable. Indeed, all ſtrangers are agreed, that, provided you exclude the faſhionable topick, there is no country in the world whoſe women have more knowledge, talk more ſenſibly, with more judgement, and

are

are more capable of giving advice. If from the Spaniſh, Italian, or German ladies we ſhould take the jargon of gallantry and wit, what would there remain of their converſation! and you, my Eloiſa, are not ignorant how it is in general with our country-women. But if, with a French-woman, a man has reſolution to ſacrifice his pretenſions to gallantry, and to draw her out of that favourite fortreſs, ſhe will then make a virtue of neceſſity, and arming herſelf with reaſon, will fight manfully in the open field. With regard to their goodneſs of heart, I will not inſtance their zeal to ſerve their friends; for, as with the reſt of mankind, that may partly proceed from ſelf-love. But though they generally love nobody but themſelves, long habit will frequently produce in them the effects of a ſincere friendſhip. Thoſe who have conſtancy enough to ſupport an attachment of ten years, commonly continue it to the end of their lives, and they will then love their old friends with more tenderneſs, at leaſt with more fidelity than their new lovers.

One common accuſation againſt the women of France is, that they do every thing, and conſequently more evil than good; but it may be obſerved in their juſtification, that in doing evil they are ſtimulated by the men, and in doing good are actuated by their own principles. This does not in any ways contradict what I ſaid before, that the heart has no concern in the commerce between the two ſexes; for the gallantry

of the French has given to the women an univerſal power, which ſtands in no need of tenderneſs to ſupport it. Every thing depends upon the ladies; all things are done by them, or for them; Olympus and Parnaſſus, glory and fortune, are equally ſubject to their laws. Neither books nor authours have any other value or eſteem than that which the ladies are pleaſed to allow them. There is no appeal from their decree in matters of the niceſt judgement or moſt trivial taſte. Poetry, criticiſm, hiſtory, philoſophy, are all calculated for the ladies, and even the Bible itſelf has lately been metamorphoſed into a polite romance. In publick affairs, their influence ariſes from their natural aſcendancy over their huſbands, not becauſe they are their huſbands, but becauſe they are men, and it would be monſtrous for a man to refuſe any thing to a lady, even though ſhe were his wife.

Yet this authority implies neither attachment nor eſteem, but merely politeneſs and compliance with cuſtom; for it is as eſſential to French gallantry to deſpiſe the women as to oblige them; and this contempt is taken as a proof that a man has ſeen enough of the world to know the ſex. Whoever treats them with reſpect is deemed a novice, a knight-errant, one who has known woman only in romances. They judge ſo equitably of themſelves, that to honour them is to forfeit their eſteem; ſo that the principal requiſite in a man of gallantry is ſuperlative impertinence.

Let

Let the ladies of this country pretend what they will, they are, in ſpite of themſelves, extremely good-natured. All men who are burthened with a multiplicity of affairs are difficult of acceſs, and without commiſeration; and in Paris, the centre of buſineſs of one of the moſt conſiderable nations in Europe, the men of conſequence are particularly obdurate: thoſe, therefore, who have any thing to aſk, naturally apply to the ladies, whoſe ears are never ſhut againſt the unhappy: they conſole and ſerve them. In the midſt of all their frivolous diſſipation, they do not ſcruple to ſteal a few moments from their pleaſures, and devote them to acts of benevolence; and though there may be ſome women mean enough to make an infamous traffick of their ſervices, there are hundreds, on the contrary, who are daily employed in charitably aſſiſting the diſtreſſed. However, it muſt be confeſſed, that they are ſometimes ſo indiſcreet, as to ruin an unfortunate man they happen not to know, in order to ſerve their own friend. But how is it poſſible to know every body in ſo extenſive a country! or how can more be expected from good-nature deſtitute of real virtue, whoſe ſublimeſt effort is not ſo much to do good, as to avoid evil? After all, it muſt be allowed that their inclinations are not naturally bad; that they do a great deal of good; that they do it from their hearts; that they alone preſerve the remains of humanity, which is ſtill to be found in Paris, and

that without them we ſhould ſee the men avaricious and inſatiable, like wolves devouring each other.

I ſhould have remained ignorant of all this, if I had not conſulted their comedies and romances, whoſe authours are, perhaps, too apt to ſtumble upon thoſe foibles from which they themſelves are not exempt, rather than the virtues they happen not to poſſeſs; who, inſtead of encouraging their readers by praiſing their real virtues, amuſe themſelves with painting imaginary characters too perfect for imitation.

Romances are, perhaps, the laſt vehicle of inſtruction that can be adminiſtered to a corrupt people. It were to be wiſhed that none were ſuffered to prepare this medicine but men of honeſt principles and true ſenſibility; authours, whoſe writings ſhould be a picture of their own hearts; who, inſtead of fixing virtue in the heavens, beyond the reach of our nature, would, by ſmoothing the way, inſenſibly tempt us out of the gulf of vice.

But to return to the Pariſian ladies; concerning whom I do not by any means agree in the common opinion. They are univerſally allowed to have the moſt enchanting addreſs, the moſt ſeducing manner; to be the moſt refined coquets, to poſſeſs the moſt ſublime gallantry, and the art of pleaſing to a ſuperlative degree. For my part, I think their addreſs ſhocking, their coquettiſh airs diſguſting, and their manner extremely immodeſt. I ſhould imagine that the heart

heart would ſhrink back at all their advances: and I can never be perſuaded, that they can for a ſingle moment talk of love, without ſhowing themſelves incapable of either feeling or inſpiring that tender paſſion.

On the other hand, we find them repreſented as frivolous, artful, falſe, thoughtleſs, inconſtant, talking well, but without reflexion or ſentiment, and evaporating all their merit in idle chit-chat. But to me all this appears to be as external as their *rouge* or their hoop-petticoats. There are a kind of faſhionable vices which are ſuppoſed neceſſary at Paris, but which are not incompatible with ſenſe, reaſon, humanity, and good-nature. Theſe ladies are, in many caſes, more diſcreet, and leſs given to tattling than thoſe of any other country. They are better inſtructed, and the things they are taught have ſtronger effect upon their judgement. In ſhort, if I diſlike them for having disfigured the proper characteriſticks of their ſex, I eſteem them for thoſe virtues in which they reſemble us; and my opinion is, that they are better calculated to be men of merit, than amiable women.

One word more, and I have done—If Eloiſa had never been, if my heart had been capable of any other attachment than that for which it was created, I ſhould never have taken a wife or miſtreſs in Paris; but ſhould gladly have choſen a friend, and ſuch a treaſure might poſſibly have conſoled me for the want of the others*.

* I ſhall not give my opinion of this letter; but I doubt *much*, whether a judgement which allows them the qua-

LETTER LXXXVII.

TO ELOISA.

SINCE the receipt of your letter I have been daily with Mr. Sylveſter, to ſee after the packet you mentioned: but my impatience has been ſeven times diſappointed. At length, however, on the eight time of going, I received it; and it was no ſooner put into my hands, than, without ſtaying to pay the poſtage, even without aſking what it came to, or ſpeaking a word to any body, I ran with it out of doors; and as if I had been out of my ſenſes, paſſed by the door of my lodgings, though it ſtood open before me, and traverſed a number of ſtreets that I knew nothing of, till in about half an hour I found myſelf at the farther end of Paris. I was then obliged to take a hackney-coach, in order to get the more ſpeedily home, which is the firſt time I have made uſe of thoſe conveniences in a morning; indeed, it is with regret I uſe them even in an afternoon, to pay ſome diſtant viſits; for my legs are good, and I ſhould be ſorry that any improvement in my circumſtances ſhould make me neglect the uſe of them.

When I was ſeated in the coach, I was a good deal perplexed with my packet, as you had laid your injunctions on me to open it no where

lities they deſpiſe, and denies them thoſe which they value will be pleaſing to the French ladies.

where but at home. Beſides, I was unwilling to be ſubject to any interruption while I was indulging myſelf in that exquiſite ſatisfaction I find in every thing that comes from you. I held it, therefore, with an impatience and curioſity which I could ſcarce contain: endeavouring to diſcover its contents through the covers, by preſſing it every way with my hands; from the continual motions of which you would have thought the packet contained fire, and burned the ends of my fingers. Not but that from its ſize, weight and the contents of your former letter, I had ſome ſuſpicion; but then, how could I conceive you to have found either the opportunity or the artiſt? but what I then could not conceive is one of the miracles of almighty love; the more it ſurpaſſes my conception, the more it enchants my heart, and one of the greateſt pleaſures it gives me ariſes from my ignorance of the manner in which you could effect it.

Arrived at length at my lodgings, I flew to my chamber, locked the door, threw myſelf, out of breath, into a chair, and with a trembling hand broke open the ſeal. It was then, Eloiſa, I felt the firſt effect of this powerful taliſman. The palpitations of my heart increaſed at every paper I unfolded; till coming to the laſt, I was forced to ſtop and take breath a moment before I could open it. It is open——my ſuggeſtions are true——it is ſo——it is the portrait of Eloiſa.——O, my love! your divine

vine image is before me! I gaze with rapture on your charms! my lips, my heart, pay them the firſt homage, my knees bend ——Again, my eyes are raviſhed with your heavenly beauties. How immediate, how powerful is their magical effect! No, Eloiſa, it requires not, as you pretend, a quarter of an hour to make itſelf perceived! a minute, an inſtant ſuffices, to draw from my breaſt a thouſand ardent ſighs, and to recall, with thy image, the rememberance of my paſt happineſs. Ah! why is the rapture of having ſuch a treaſure in poſſeſſion allayed with ſo much bitterneſs? how lively is the repreſentation it gives me of days that are no more! I gaze on the portrait, I think I ſee Eloiſa, and enjoy in imagination thoſe delightful moments, whoſe rememberance imbitters my preſent hours; and which heaven in its anger beſtowed on me only to take them away. Alas! the next inſtant undeceives me; the pangs of abſence throb with increaſed violence, after the agreeable deluſion is vaniſhed, and I am in the ſtate of thoſe miſerable wretches, whoſe tortures are remitted only to render them the more cruel. Heavens! what flames have not my eager eyes darted on this unexpected object! how has the ſight of it rouſed in me thoſe impetuous emotions which uſed to be effected by your preſence? O, my Eloiſa! were it poſſible for this taliſman to affect your ſenſes with the phrenſy and illuſion of mine——But why is it not poſſible? why may not thoſe impreſſions, which the mind darts forth with ſuch rapidity,

rapidity, reach as far as Eloiſa? Ah, my charming friend! wherever you are, or however you are employed, at the time I am writing, at the time your portrait receives the ſame homage I pay to the idol of my ſoul, do you not perceive your charming face bedewed with tears? Do you not ſympathiſe with me in love and ſorrow? Do you not feel the ardour of a lover's kiſſes on your lips, your cheeks, your breaſt? Do you not glow all over with the flame imparted from my burning lips?——Ha! what's that?——Somebody knocks——I will hide my treaſure——an impertinent breaks in upon me—accurſed be the cruel intruder, for interrupting me in tranſports ſo delightful! may he never be capable of love—or may he be doomed to pine in abſence, like me!

LETTER LXXXVIII.

TO MRS. ORBE.

IT is to you, dear couſin, I am to give an an account of the French opera: for although you have not mentioned it in your own letters, and Eloiſa has kept your ſecret in her's, I am not at a loſs to whom to attribute that piece of curioſity. I have been once to the opera to ſatisfy myſelf, and twice to oblige you, but am in hopes this letter will be my excuſe for going no more. If you command me, indeed, I can bear it again; I can ſuffer, I can ſleep there, for your ſervice; but

but to remain awake and attentive is abſolutely impoſſible.

But, before I tell you what I think of this famous theatre, I will give you an account of what they ſay of it here; the opinion of the connoiſſeurs may perhaps rectify mine, where I happen to be miſtaken. The French opera paſſes at Paris for the moſt pompous, the moſt delightful, the moſt wonderful entertainment that was ever effected by the united efforts of the human genius. It is ſaid to be the moſt ſuperb monument of the magnificence of Louis the Fourteenth. In fact, every one is not ſo much at liberty, as you imagine, to give his opinion on ſo grave a ſubject. Every thing may be made a point of diſpute here, except muſick and the opera; but with reſpect to theſe, it may be dangerous not to diſſemble one's thoughts, as the French muſick is ſupported by an inquiſition no leſs arbitrary than ſevere. Indeed, the firſt leſſon which ſtrangers are taught, is, that foreigners univerſally allow that nothing in the whole world is ſo fine as the opera at Paris. The truth is, diſcreet people are ſilent upon this topick, becauſe they dare not laugh except in private.

It muſt be allowed, however, that they repreſent at the opera, at a vaſt expenſe, not only all the wonderful things of nature, but many others ſtill more wonderful, and which nature never produced. For my part, I cannot help thinking Mr. Pope meant this theatre, where he ſaid,

ſaid, one might ſee gods, devils, monſters, kings, ſhepherds, and fairies, all mixed together in one ſcene of confuſion.

This aſſemblage, ſo magnificent and well conducted, is regarded by the ſpectators as if all the things and characters exibited were real. On ſeeing the repreſentation of a heathen temple, they are ſeiſed with a profound reverence; and, if the goddeſs be tolerably pretty, half the men in the pit are immediately pagans.

Here the audience are not ſo nice as at the French comedy. Theſe very ſpectators, who could not there conſider the player as the character he repreſented, cannot at the opera conſider him any otherwiſe. It ſeems as if they were ſhocked at a rational deception, and could give into nothing but what was groſsly abſurd; or perhaps they can more eaſily conceive players to be gods than heroes. Jupiter being of another nature, people may think of him as they pleaſe; but Cato was a man, and how few men are there, who, to judge for themſelves, have any reaſon to think ſuch a man as Cato ever exiſted.

This opera is not compoſed, therefore, as in other places, of a company of mercenaries, hired to furniſh out an entertainment for the publick. It is true, they are paid by the publick, and it is their buſineſs to attend the opera: but the nature of it is quite changed by its becoming a royal academy of muſick; a ſort of ſovereign tribunal that judges without appeal

in its own cauſe, and is not very remarkable for juſtice and integrity. Thus, you ſee how much in ſome countries the eſſence of things depends on mere words, and how a reſpectable title may do honour to that which leaſt deſerves it.

The members of this illuſtrious academy are not degraded by their profeſſion: in revenge, however, they are excommunicated, which is directly contrary to the cuſtom of all other countries: but, perhaps, having had their choice, they had rather live honourably and be damned, than, as plebeians, go vulgarly to heaven. I have ſeen a modern chevalier on the French theatre, as proud of the profeſſion of a player, as the unfortunate Laberius was formerly mortified at it, although the latter was forced into it by the commands of Cæſar, and recited only his own works*. But then our degraded ancient

* Obliged by the tyrant to appear on the ſtage, he lamented his diſgrace in ſome very affecting verſes, which juſtly irritated every honeſt mind againſt Cæſar. *After having lived* (ſaid he) *ſixty years with honour, I left my houſe this morning, a Roman knight, but ſhall return to it this evening an infamous ſtage player. Alas! I have lived a day too long. O fortune! if it was my lot to be thus once diſgraced, why did you not force me bither while youth and vigour had left me at leaſt an agreeable perſon: but now, what a wretched object do I preſent to the inſults of the people of Rome? a feeble voice, a weak body, a mere corpſe, an animated ſkeleton, which has nothing left of me but my name.* The entire prologue which he ſpoke on this occaſion, the injuſtice

cient could not afterwards take his place in the Circus among the Roman knights; whilſt the modern one found his every day at the French comedy, among the firſt nobility in the kingdom. And I will venture to ſay, never did they talk at Rome with ſo much reſpect of the majeſty of the Roman people, as they do at Paris of the majeſty of the opera.

This is what I have gathered chiefly from converſation about this ſplendid entertainment: I will now relate to you what I have ſeen of it myſelf.

Imagine to yourſelf the inſide of a large box, about fifteen feet wide, and long in proportion: this box is the ſtage; on each ſide are placed ſkreens, at different diſtances, on which the objects of the ſcene are coarſely painted. Beyond this is a great curtain, bedaubed in the ſame manner; which extends from one ſide to the other, and is generally cut through, to repreſent caves in the earth, and openings in the heavens, as the perſpective requires. So that, if any perſon, in walking behind the ſcenes, ſhould happen to bruſh againſt the curtain, he might cauſe an earthquake ſo violent as to ſhake

—— our

injuſtice done him by Cæſar, who was picqed at the noble freedom with which he avenged his offended honour, the affront he received at the Circus, the meanneſs of Cicero in upbraiding him, with the ingenious and ſatirical reply of Laberius, are all preſerved by Aulus Gellius, and compoſe, in my opinion, the moſt curious and intereſting piece in his whole collection; which is, for the moſt part, a very inſipid one.

—— our ſides with laughing. The ſkies are repreſented by a parcel of bluiſh rags, hung up with lines and poles, like wet linen at the waſher-woman's. The ſun, for he is repreſented here ſometimes, is a large candle in a lantern. The chariots of the gods and goddeſſes are made of four bits of wood, nailed together in the form of a ſquare, and hung up by a ſtrong cord, like a ſwing: acroſs the middle is faſtened a board, on which the deity ſits a-ſtraddle; and in the front of it hangs a piece of coarſe canvaſs, bedaubed with paint, to repreſent the clouds that attend on this magnificent car. The bottom of this machine is illuminated by two or three ſtinking, unſnuffed candles, which as often as the celeſtial perſonage buſtles about and ſhakes his ſwing, ſmoke him deliciouſly with incenſe worthy ſuch a divinity.

As theſe chariots are the moſt conſiderable machines of the opera, you may judge by them of the reſt. A troubled ſea is made of long rollers covered with canvaſs or blue paper, laid parallel, and turned by the dirty underſtrappers of the theatre. Their thunder is a heavy cart, which rumbles over the floor, and is not the leaſt affecting inſtrument of their agreeable muſick. The flaſhes of lightening are made by throwing powdered reſin into the flame of a link; and the falling thunderbolt is a cracker at the end of a ſquib.

The ſtage is provided with little ſquare trap-doors; which, opening on occaſion, give notice that the infernal dæmons are coming out of the cellar. And when they are to be carried up into the air, they ſubſtitute dexterouſly in their room little devils of brown canvaſs ſtuffed with ſtraw, or ſometimes real chimney-ſweepers, who are drawn up by ropes, and ride triumphant through the air, till they majeſtically enter the clouds, and are loſt among the dirty rags I mentioned. But what is really tragical is, that when the tackle is not well managed, or the ropes happen to break, down come infernal ſpirits and immortal gods together, and break their limbs, and ſometimes their necks. To all this I ſhall add their monſters; which certainly make ſome ſcenes very pathetick, ſuch as their dragons, lizards, tortoiſes, crocodiles, and great toads, all which ſtalk or crawl about the ſtage with a threatening air, and put one in mind of the temptation of St. Anthony; every one of theſe figures being animated by a looby of a Savoyard, who has not even ſenſe enough to play the brute.

Thus you ſee, couſin, in what conſiſts in a great degree, the ſplendid furniture of the opera; at leaſt, thus much I could obſerve from the pit, with the help of my glaſs; for you muſt not imagine theſe expedients are much hid, or produce any great illuſion: I only tell you here what I ſaw, and what every other unprejudiced ſpectator might have ſeen as well as myſelf. I was told, nevertheleſs, that a prodigious quan-

tity

tity of machinery is employed to effect all theſe motions, and was ſeveral times offered a ſight of it; but I was never curious to ſee in what manner extraordinary efforts were made to produce inſignificant effects.

The number of people engaged in the ſervice of the opera is inconceivable. The orcheſtra and chorus together conſiſts of near an hundred perſons: there is a multitude of dancers, every part being doubly and trebly ſupplied*; that is to ſay, there is always one or two inferior actors ready to take the place of the principal, and who are paid for doing nothing, till the principal is pleaſed to do nothing in his turn, and which is ſeldom long before it happens. After a few repreſentations, their chief actors, who are perſonages of great conſequence, honour the publick no more with their preſence in that piece, but give up their parts to their ſubſtitutes, or to the ſubſtitutes of thoſe ſubſtitutes. They receive always the ſame money at the door; but the ſpectator does not always meet with the ſame entertainment. Every one takes a ticket, as he does in the lottery, without knowing what will be his prize; but, be it what it will, no body dares complain; for you are to know, that the honourable members of this academy owe the publick no manner of reſpect; it is the publick which owes it to them.

I will

* They know nothing of this in Italy; the publick would not ſuffer it, and thus the entertainment is ſubject to leſs expenſe; it would coſt too much to be thus ill ſerved.

I will ſay nothing to you of their muſick, becauſe you are acquainted with it. But you can have no idea of the frightful cries and hideous bellowings with which the theatre reſounds during the repreſentation. The actreſſes, throwing themſelves into convulſions as it were, rend their lungs with ſqueaking: in the mean time, with their fiſts clenched againſt their ſtomachs, their heads thrown back, their faces red, their veins ſwelled, and their breaſts heaving, one knows not which is moſt diſagreeably affected, the eye or the ear. Their actions make thoſe ſuffer as much who ſee them, as their ſinging does thoſe who hear them; and yet what is inconceivable is, that theſe howlings are almoſt the only thing the audience applaud. By the clapping of their hands, one would imagine them a parcel of deaf people, delighted to be able to hear the voice now-and-then ſtrained to the higheſt pitch, and that they ſtrove to encourage the actors to repeat their efforts. For my part, I am perſuaded that they applaud the ſqueaking of an actreſs at the opera, for the ſame reaſon as they do the tricks of a tumbler or poſture-maſter at the fair: it is diſpleaſing and painful to ſee them; one is in pain while they laſt; but we are ſo glad to ſee all paſs off without any accident, that we willingly give them applauſe.

Think how well this manner of ſinging is adapted to expreſs all the ſoft and tender writings of Quinault. Imagine the Muſes, Loves, and Graces, imagine Venus herſelf, expreſſing her

ſentiments

ſentiments in this delicate manner, and judge of the effects. As to their devils, let us leave their muſick to ſomething infernal enough to ſuit it. As alſo that of their magicians, conjurers, and witches; all which, however, meets with the greateſt applauſe at the French opera.

To theſe raviſhing ſounds, as harmonious as ſweet, we may very deſervedly join thoſe of the orcheſtra. Conceive to yourſelf a continual claſhing of jarring inſtruments, attended with the drawling and perpetual groans of the baſs, a noiſe the moſt doleful and inſupportable that I ever heard in my life, and which I could never bear a quarter of an hour together, without being ſeiſed with a violent head-ach. All this forms a ſpecies of pſalmody, which has commonly neither time nor tune. But when, by accident, they hit on an air a little lively, the feet of the audience are immediately in motion, and the whole houſe thunders with their clattering. The pit in particular, with much pains and a great noiſe, always imitate a certain performer in the orcheſtra*. Delighted to perceive for a moment that cadence which they ſo ſeldom feel, they ſtrain their ears, voice, hands, feet, and in ſhort their whole body, to keep that time which is every moment ready to eſcape them. Inſtead of this the Italians and Germans, who are more eaſily affected with the meaſures of their muſick, purſue them without any effort, and have never any occaſion to beat time: at leaſt, Regianino has

* *Le Bucheron.*

has often told me, that at the opera in Italy, where the muſick is ſo affecting and lively, you will never ſee, or hear, in the orcheſtra or among the ſpectators, the leaſt motion of either hands or feet. But in this country every thing ſerves to prove the dulneſs of their muſical organs; their voices are harſh and unpleaſing, their tones affected and drawling, and their tranſitions hard and diſſonant: there is no cadence nor melody in their ſongs; their martial inſtruments, the fifes of the infantry, the trumpets of their cavalry, their horns, their hautboys, the ballad-ſingers in the ſtreets, and the fidlers in their publick-houſes, all have ſomething ſo horribly grating as to ſhock the moſt indelicate ear*. All talents are not beſtowed on the ſame men, and the French in general are of all the people in Europe thoſe of the leaſt aptitude for muſick. Lord B—— pretends that the Engliſh have as little; but the difference is, that they know it, and care nothing about the matter, whereas the French give up a thouſand juſt pretenſions, and will ſubmit to be cenſured in any other point whatever, ſooner than admit they are not the firſt muſicians in the world. There are even people at Paris who look upon the cultivation of muſick as the concern of the ſtate, perhaps becauſe the improvement of Timotheus's lyre was ſo at Sparta. However this be, the opera here may, for aught I know,

* The light airs of the French muſick have not been unaptly compared to a cow's courant, or the hobblings of a fat gooſe attempting to fly.

be a good political inſtitution, in that it pleaſes perſons of taſte no better. But to return to my deſcription—

The *ballets*, which are the moſt brilliant parts of the opera, conſidered of themſelves, afford a pleaſing entertainment, as they are magnificent and truely theatrical; but, as they enter into the compoſition of the piece, it is in that light we muſt conſider them.

You remember the operas of Quinault; you know in what manner the diverſions are there introduced; it is much the ſame, or rather worſe, with his ſucceſſors. In every act, the action of the piece is ſtopped ſhort, juſt at the moſt intereſting period, by an interlude which is repreſented before the actors, who are ſeated on the ſtage, while the audience in the pit are kept ſtanding. From theſe interruptions it frequently happens, that the characters of the piece are quite forgotten, and always that the ſpectators are kept looking at actors, that are looking at ſomething elſe. The faſhion of theſe interludes is very ſimple. If the prince is in a good humour, it partakes of the gaiety of his diſpoſition, and is a dance; if he is diſpleaſed, it is contrived, in order to bring him to temper again, and it is a dance. I know not whether it be the faſhion at court to make a ball for the entertainment of the king when he is out of humour; but this I know, with reſpect to our opera kings, that one cannot ſufficiently admire their ſtoical firmneſs and philoſophy, in ſitting ſo tranquil to ſee comick dances

dances and attend to ſongs, while the fate of their kingdoms, crowns, and lives is ſometimes determined behind the ſcenes. But they have beſides many other occaſions for the introduction of dances; the moſt ſolemn actions of human life are here performed in a dance. The parſons dance, the ſoldiers dance, the gods dance, the devils dance, the mourners dance at their funerals, and in ſhort all their characters dance upon all occaſions.

Dancing is thus the fourth of the fine arts employed in the conſtitution of the lyrick drama: the other three are arts of imitation; but what is imitated in dancing? nothing.—It is therefore foreign to the purpoſe; for what buſineſs is there for minuets or rigadoons in a tragedy? Nay, I will venture to ſay, dancing would be equally abſurd in ſuch compoſitions, though ſomething was imitated by it: for of all the dramatick unities, the moſt indiſpenſable is that of language or expreſſion; and an opera made up partly of ſinging, partly of dancing, is even more ridiculous than that in which they ſing half French half Italian.

Not content to introduce dancing as an eſſential part of the compoſition, they even attempt to make it the principal, having operas, which they call *ballets*, and which ſo badly anſwer their title, that dancing is no leſs out of character in them than in all the reſt. Moſt of theſe ballets conſiſt of as many different ſubjects as acts; which ſubjects are connected together by certain meta-

phyſical relations, of which the ſpectator would never form the leaſt ſuſpicion or conjecture, if the author did not take care to adviſe him of it in the prologue. The ſeaſons, ages, ſenſes, elements are the ſubject of a dance; but I ſhould be glad to know what propriety there is in all this, or what ideas can by this means be conveyed to the mind of the ſpectator? Some of them again are purely allegorical, as the *carnival*, the *folly*, and are the moſt intolerable of all; becauſe, with a good deal of wit and fineſſe, they contain neither ſentiment, deſcription, plot, buſineſs, nor any thing that can either intereſt the audience, ſet off the muſick to advantage, flatter the paſſions, or heighten the illuſion. In theſe pretended ballets the action of the piece is performed in ſinging, the dancers continually finding occaſion to break in upon the ſingers, though without meaning or deſign.

The reſult of all this, however, is, that theſe ballets, being leſs intereſting than their tragedies, theſe interruptions are little remarked. Were the piece itſelf more affecting, the ſpectator would be more offended; but the one defect ſerves to hide the other, and, in order to prevent the ſpectators being tired with the dancing, the authours artfully contrive it ſo that they may be more heartily tired with the piece itſelf.

This would lead me inſenſibly to make ſome enquiries into the true compoſition of the lyrick drama, but theſe would be too prolix to be compriſed in this letter; I have, therefore, written a little

little diſſertation on that ſubject, which you will find encloſed, and may communicate to Regianino. I ſhall only add, with reſpect to the French opera, that the greateſt fault I obſerved in it, is a falſe taſte for magnificence; whence they attempt to repreſent the marvellous, which, being only the object of imagination, is introduced with as much propriety in an epick poem, as it is ridiculouſly attempted on the ſtage. I ſhould hardly have believed, had not I ſeen it, that there could be found artiſts weak enough to attempt an imitation of the chariot of the ſun, or ſpectators ſo childiſh as to go to ſee it. Bruyere could not conceive how ſo fine a ſight as the opera could be tireſome. For my part, who am no Bruyere, I can conceive it very well; and will maintain, that to every man who has a true taſte for the fine arts, the French muſick, their dancing, and the marvellous of their ſcenery put together, compoſe the moſt tireſome repreſentation in the world. After all, perhaps, the French do not deſerve a more perfect entertainment, eſpecially with reſpect to the performance: not becauſe they want ability to judge of what is good, but becauſe the bad pleaſes them better. For, as they had rather cenſure than applaud, the pleaſure of criticiſing compenſates for every defect, and they had rather laugh after they get home, than be pleaſed with the piece during the repreſentation.

LETTER LXXXIX.

FROM ELOISA.

YES, I ſee it well: Eloiſa is ſtill happy in your love; the ſame fire that once ſparkled in your eyes glows throughout your laſt letter, and kindles all the ardour of mine. Yes, my friend, in vain doth fortune ſeparate us; let our hearts preſs forward to each other, let us preſerve by ſuch a communication their natural warmth againſt the chilling coldneſs of abſence and deſpair; and let every thing that tends to looſen the ties of our affections ſerve only to draw them cloſer, and bind them more faſt.

You will ſmile at my ſimplicity, when I tell you, that ſince the receipt of your letter I have experienced ſomething of thoſe charming effects therein mentioned, and that the jeſt of the taliſman, although purely my own invention, is turned upon myſelf, and become ſerious. I am ſeiſed a hundred times a-day, when alone, with a fit of trembling, as if you were before me. I imagine you are gazing on my portrait, and am fooliſh enough to feel, in conceit, the warmth of thoſe embraces, the impreſſion of thoſe kiſſes, you beſtow on it. Sweet illuſion! charming effects of fancy! the laſt reſource of the unhappy. Oh! if it be poſſible, be to us a pleaſing reality! you are yet ſomething to thoſe who are deprived of real happineſs.

As to the manner in which I obtained the portrait, it was indeed the contrivance of love; but, believe

believe me, if mine could work miracles, it would not have made choice of this. I will let you into the ſecret. We had here ſome time ago a miniature painter, on his return from Italy: he brought letters from Lord B——, who perhaps had ſome view in ſending him. Mr. Orbe embraced this opportunity to have a portrait of my couſin; I was deſirous of one alſo. In return, ſhe and my mother would each have one of me, of which the painter at my requeſt took ſecretly a ſecond copy. Without troubling myſelf about the original, I choſe of the three that which I thought the moſt perfect likeneſs, with a deſign to ſend it you. I made but little ſcruple, I own, of this piece of deceit; for, as to the likeneſs of the portrait, a little more or leſs can make no great difference with my mother and couſin; but the homage you might pay to any other reſemblance than mine would be a kind of infidelity, by ſo much the more dangerous, as my picture might be handſomer than me; and I would not, on any account, that you ſhould nouriſh a paſſion for charms I do not poſſeſs. With reſpect to the drapery, I could have liked to have been not ſo negligently dreſſed; but I was not heard, and my father himſelf inſiſted on the portrait's being finiſhed as it is, except the head-dreſs. However, nothing of the habit was taken from mine, the painter having dreſſed the picture as he thought proper, and ornamented my perſon with the works of his own imagination.

LETTER XC.

TO ELOISA.

I Muſt talk to you ſtill, my dear Eloiſa, of your portrait; no longer, however, in that rapturous ſtrain which the firſt ſight of it inſpired; and with which you yourſelf were ſo much affected; but, on the contrary, with the regret of a man deceived by falſe hopes, and whom nothing can recompenſe for what he has loſt. Your portrait, like yourſelf, is both graceful and beautiful; it is alſo a tolerable likeneſs, and is painted by the hand of a maſter; but to be ſatisfied with it I ought never to have known you.

The firſt fault I find in it is, that it reſembles you, and yet is not yourſelf; that it has your likeneſs, and is inſenſible. In vain the painter thought to copy your features; where is that ſweetneſs of ſentiment that enlivens them, and without which, regular and beautiful as they are, they are nothing? Your heart, Eloiſa, no painting can imitate. This defect, I own, ſhould be attributed to the imperfection of the art; but it is the fault of the artiſt not to have been exact in every thing that depended on himſelf. He has, for inſtance, brought the hair too forward on the temples, which gives the forehead a leſs agreeable and delicate air. He has alſo forgotten two or three little veins, ſeen though the tranſparent ſkin in winding branches of purple, reſembling thoſe of the Iris we once ſtood admiring in

in the gardens of *Clarens*. The colouring of the cheeks is alſo too near the eyes, and is not ſoftened into that glowing bluſh of the roſe toward the lower part of the face which diſtinguiſhes the lovely original. One would take it for an artificial *rouge*, plaſtered on like the carmine of the French ladies. Nor is this defect a ſmall one, as it makes the eyes appear leſs ſoft, and its looks more bold.

But, pray, what has he done with thoſe dimples wherein the little Cupids lurk at the corners of your mouth, and which in my fortunate days I uſed to ſtifle with kiſſes? He has not given half their beauty to theſe charming lips. He has not given the mouth that agreeable ſerious turn, which, changing in an inſtant into a ſmile, raviſhes the heart with inconceivable enchantment, and inſpires it with an inſtantaneous rapture which no words can expreſs. It is true, your portrait cannot paſs from the ſerious to a ſmile. This is, alas! the very thing of which I complain. To paint all your charms you ſhould be drawn every inſtant of your life.

But to paſs over the injuſtice the painter has done you, in overlooking your beauties, he has done you more in having omitted your defects. He has left out that almoſt imperceptible mole under your right eye, as well as that on the right ſide of your neck. He has not—heavens!—was the man a ſtatue—he has forgot the little ſcar under your lip; he has made your hair and eyebrows of the ſame colour; which they are not.

Your eye-brows are more upon the chesnut, and your hair rather of the ash colour.

Bionda testa, occhi azurri, e bruno ciglio.

Light hair, blue eyes, and eye-brows lovely brown.

He has made the lower part of the face exactly oval; not observing the small hollow between your cheeks and chin, which makes their out-lines less regular and more agreeable. These are the most palpable defects; but he has omitted several others, for which I owe him no good will: for I am not only in love with your beauties, but with Eloisa herself, just as she is. If you would not be obliged for any charm to the pencil, I would not have you lose by it the smallest defect; my heart can never be affected by charms that are not your own.

As to the drapery, I shall take the more notice of it, as, whether in a deshabille or otherwise, I have always seen you dressed with more taste than you are in the portrait: the head dress is too large: you will say it is composed only of flowers: that is true; but there are too many. Don't you remember the ball, at which you were dressed like a country girl, and your cousin told me I danced like a philosopher? you had then no other head-dress than your long tresses, turned up and fastened at top with a golden bodkin, in the manner of the villagers of Bern. No, the sun glittering in all its radiance displays not half that lustre with which you then engaged the eyes and hearts of the beholders; and there is no one who saw you that

that day, that can ever forget you during his whole life. It is thus, my Eloiſa, your head ought to have been dreſſed. It is your charming hair that ſhould adorn your face, and not thoſe ſpreading roſes. Tell my couſin, for I diſcover her choice and direction, that the flowers with which ſhe has thus covered and profaned your treſſes are in no better taſte than thoſe ſhe gathers in *Adonis*. One might overlook them, did they ſerve as an ornament to beauty, but I cannot permit them to hide it.

With reſpect to the buſt, it is ſingular that a lover ſhould be more nice in this particular than a father; but, to ſay the truth, I think you are too careleſsly dreſſed. The portrait of Eloiſa ſhould be modeſt as herſelf. Theſe hidden charms ſhould be ſacred to love. You ſay the painter drew them from his imagination. I believe it; indeed, I believe it. Had he caught the leaſt glimpſe of thine, his eyes would have gazed on them for ever, but his hand would not have attempted to paint them: why was it neceſſary the raſh artiſt ſhould form them in imagination? this was not only an offenſe againſt decency, but I will maintain it alſo to be want of taſte. Yes, your countenance is too modeſt to ſupport the diſorder of your breaſt; it is plain that one of theſe objects ought to hinder the other from being ſeen: it is the privilege of love alone to ſee both together, and when its glowing hand uncovers the charms that modeſty con-

ceals, the ſweet confuſion of your eyes ſhows that you forget not that you expoſe them.

Such are the criticiſms that a continual attention has occaſioned me to make on your portrait; in conſequence of which I have formed a deſign to alter it, agreeably to my own taſte. I have communicated my intentions to an able maſter, and from what he has already done, I hope to ſee you ſoon more like yourſelf. For fear of ſpoiling the picture, however, we try our alterations firſt on a copy, which I have made him take; and make them in the original only when we are quite ſure of their effect. Although I deſign but indifferently, my artiſt cannot help admiring the ſubtilty of my obſervations; but he does not know that love, who dictates them, is a greater maſter than he. I ſeem to him alſo ſometimes very whimſical: he tells me I am the firſt lover that ever choſe to hide objects which others think cannot be too much expoſed; and when I anſwer him, it is in order to have a full view of you, that I dreſs you up with ſo much care, he ſtares at me, as if he thought me a fool. Ah! my Eloiſa, how much more affecting would be your portrait, if I could but find out the means to diſplay in it your mind as well as your face; to paint at once your modeſty and your charms! what would not the latter gain by ſuch an amendment! at preſent, thoſe only are ſeen which the painter imagined, and the raviſhed ſpectator thinks them ſuch as they are. I know not what

ſecret

ſecret enchantment is about your perſon, but every thing that touches you ſeems to partake of its virtues: one need only perceive the hem of your garment to revere the wearer of it. One perceives in your dreſs how the veil of the graces affords a covering to the model of beauty; and the taſte of your modeſt apparel diſplays to the mind all thoſe charms it conceals.

LETTER XCI.

TO ELOISA.

OH! Eloiſa! you whom once I could call mine, though now I profane your virtuous name! my pen drops from my trembling hand; I blot the paper with my tears; I can hardly trace the firſt words of a letter, which ought never to be written: alas! I can neither ſpeak nor be ſilent. Come, thou dear and reſpectable image of my love, come, purify and ſtrengthen a heart depreſſed with ſhame, and torn to pieces by remorſe. Support my reſolution that fails me, and give my contrition the power to avow the involuntary crime into which the abſence of Eloiſa has plunged me.

Oh! Eloiſa! how contemptible will you think me! and yet you cannot hold me in greater contempt than I do myſelf. Abject as I may ſeem in your eyes, I am yet a hundred times more ſo in my own: for, in reflecting on my own demerits, what mortifies me moſt, is to ſee,

to feel you ſtill in my heart, in a place hence-forward ſo little worthy of your image; and to think that the rememberance of the trueſt pleaſures of love could not prevent me from falling into a ſnare that had no lure, from being led into a crime that preſented no temptation.

Such is the exceſs of my confuſion, that I am afraid, even in recurring to your clemency, leſt the peruſal of the lines in which I confeſs my guilt ſhould offend you. Let your purity and chaſtity forgive me a recital which ſhould have been ſpared your modeſty, were it not the means to expiate, in ſome degree, my infidelity. I know I am unworthy of your goodneſs; I am a mean, deſpicable wretch, but I will not be an hypocrite, and deceive you, for I had rather you ſhould deprive me of your love, and even life itſelf, than to impoſe on Eloiſa for a moment. Leſt I ſhould be tempted, therefore, to ſeek excuſes to palliate my crime, which will only render me the more criminal, I will confine myſelf to an exact relation of what has happened to me—a relation that ſhall be as ſincere as my repentance, which is all I ſhall ſay in my defenſe.

I had commenced acquaintance with ſome officers in the guards, and other young people among my countrymen, in whom I found a good innate diſpoſition, which I was ſorry to ſee ſpoiled by the imitation of I know not what falſe airs, which nature never deſigned for them. They laughed at me in their turn, for preſerving

preſerving in Paris the ſimplicity of our ancient Helvetian manners; and, conſtruing my maxims and behaviour into an indirect cenſure of their's, reſolved to make me a convert to their own practices, at all hazards. After ſeveral attempts which did not ſucceed, they made another too well concerted to fail of ſucceſs. Yeſterday morning they came to me, with a propoſal to go with them to the lady of a certain colonel they mentioned; who, from the report, they were pleaſed to ſay, of my good ſenſe, had a mind to be acquainted with me. Fool enough to give into this idle ſtory, I repreſented to them the propriety of firſt making her a viſit; but they laughed at my punctilios, telling me the frankneſs of a Swiſs did not at all agree with ſuch formality, and that ſo much ceremony would only ſerve to give her a bad opinion of me. At nine o'clock then in the evening we waited on the lady. She came out to receive us on the ſtair-caſe, through an exceſs of civility which I had never ſeen practiſed before. Having entered the apartment, I obſerved a ſervant lighting up pieces of old wax candles over the chimney, and over all an air of preparation which did not at all pleaſe me. The miſtreſs of the houſe appeared handſome, though a little paſt her prime: there were alſo ſeveral other women with her much about the ſame age and figure; their dreſs, which was rich enough, had more of finery in it than taſte; but I have already obſerved to you that this is not a

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ſure ſign by which to judge of the condition of the women of this country.—The firſt compliments were made as uſual, cuſtom teaching one to cut them ſhort, or to turn them into pleaſantry, before they grow tireſome. Something unuſual, however, appeared as ſoon as our diſcourſe became general and ſerious. I thought the ladies ſeemed to wear an air of reſtraint, as if it were not familiar to them; and now, for the firſt time ſince I have been at Paris, I ſaw women at a loſs to ſupport a rational converſation. To find an eaſy topick, they brought up at length their family affairs, and as I knew none of them, I had little ſhare in the converſation. Never before did I hear ſo much talk of the colonel, and the colonel; which not a little ſurpriſed me, in the country where it is the cuſtom to diſtinguiſh people rather by their names than by their profeſſion, and in which almoſt every man of rank in the army has beſides ſome other title of diſtinction.

The affectation of dignity ſoon gave way to a behaviour more natural to them: they began to talk low, and, running inſenſibly into an air of indecent familiarity, they laughed and whiſpered every time they looked at me, while the lady of the houſe aſked me the ſituation of my heart, with a certain boldneſs of manner not at all adapted to make a conqueſt of it. The table was ſpread, and that freedom which ſeems to make no diſtinction of perſons, but generally puts every one without deſign in the proper place,

place, fully convinced me what ſort of company I was in. But it was too late to recede: putting confidence, therefore, in my averſion, I determined to apply that evening to obſervation, and to employ in the ſtudy of that order of women, the only opportunity I might ever have. Little, however, was the fruit of my attention: I found them ſo inſenſible to their preſent ſituation, ſo void of apprehenſions for the future, and, excepting the tricks of their profeſſion, ſo ſtupid in all reſpects, that the contempt into which they ſunk in my opinion ſoon effaced the pity I firſt entertained for them. In ſpeaking even of pleaſure itſelf, I ſaw they were incapable of feeling it. They appeared rapacious after every thing that could gratify their avarice; and, excepting what regarded their intereſt, I heard not a word drop from their lips that came from the heart. I was aſtoniſhed to think how men, not abandoned like themſelves, could ſupport ſo diſguſtful a ſociety. It were, in my opinion, the moſt cruel puniſhment that could be inflicted, to oblige them to keep ſuch company.

We ſat a long while at ſupper, and the company at length began to grow noiſy. For want of love, the wine went briſkly round, to inflame the gueſts; the diſcourſe was not tender but immodeſt, and the women ſtrove, by the diſorder of their dreſs, to excite thoſe paſſions which ſhould have cauſed that diſorder. All this had a very different effect upon me, and their endeavours

deavours to ſeduce me only heightened my diſguſt. Sweet modeſty! (ſaid I to myſelf) it is thine to inſpire the ſubliméſt raptures love can beſtow! how impotent are female charms when thou haſt left them! if the ſex did but know thy power, what pains would they not take to preſerve thee inviolate; if not for the ſake of virtue, at leaſt for their intereſt! But modeſty is not to be aſſumed. There is not a more ridiculous artifice in the world than that of the prude who affects it. What a difference, thought I, is there between the impudence of theſe creatures, with their licentious expreſſions, and thoſe timid and tender looks, thoſe converſations ſo full of modeſty, ſo delicate, ſo ſentimental, which—but I dare not finiſh the ſentence—I bluſh at the compariſon—I reproach myſelf, as if it were criminal, with the delightful remembrance of her who purſues me wherever I go. But how ſhall I now dare to think of her?—alas! it is impoſſible to eraſe your image from my heart: let me then ſtrive to conceal it there.

The noiſe, the diſcourſe I heard, together with the objects that preſented themſelves to my view, inſenſibly inflamed me; my two neighbours plied me inceſſantly with wine. I found my head confuſed, and, though I drank all the while a good deal of water in my wine, I now took more water, and at length determined to drink water only. It was then I perceived the pretended water ſet before me was white wine, and that I had drank it from the firſt. I made no complaints

plaints, as they would only have ſubjected me to raillery, but gave over drinking entirely. But it was too late, the miſchief was already done, and the intoxicating effects of what I had already drank ſoon deprived me of the little ſenſe that remained. I was ſurpriſed, on recovering my ſenſes, to find myſelf in a retired cloſet, locked in the embraces of one of thoſe creatures I had ſupped with, and in the ſame inſtant had the mortification to find myſelf as criminal as I could poſſibly be.

I have finiſhed this horrible relation. Would to heaven it might never more offend your eyes, nor torture my memory! O Eloiſa! it is from you I expect my doom: I demand, I deſerve, your ſeverity. Whatever be my puniſhment, it will be leſs cruel than the remembrance of my crime.

LETTER XCII.

THE ANSWER

YOU may be eaſy as to the fear of having offended me. Your letter rather excited my grief than my anger. It is not me, it is yourſelf you have offended, by a debauch in which the heart had no ſhare. I am at this, however, but the more afflicted; for I had much rather you ſhould affront Eloiſa than debaſe yourſelf; and the injury you have done to your own perſon is that only which I cannot forgive—To regard only

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the fault of which you accuſe yourſelf, you are not ſo culpable as you imagine: I can reproach you on that account only with imprudence. But what I blame you for is of greater moment, and proceeds from a failing that has taken deeper root than you imagine, and which it is the part of a friend to lay before you.

Your firſt errour lies in having taken a wrong path, in which the farther you advance the more you will go aſtray; and I tremble to ſee that, unleſs you tread back the ſteps you have taken, you are inevitably loſt. You have ſuffered yourſelf to be led inſenſibly into the very ſnares I dreaded. The more groſs and palpable allurements of vice I knew could not ſeduce you, but the bad company you keep hath begun, by deluding your reaſon, to corrupt your morals, and hath already made the firſt eſſay of its maxims on your behaviour.

You have told me nothing, it is true, in particular, of the acquaintance you have made in Paris; but it is eaſy to judge of your companions by your letters, and of thoſe who point out the objects, by your manner of deſcribing them. I have not concealed from you how little ſatisfied I have been with your remarks; you have nevertheleſs continued them in the ſame ſtile, which has only increaſed my diſpleaſure. In fact, one would rather take your obſervations for the ſarcaſms of ſome petit-maitre, than for the animadverſions of a philoſopher; and it is hardly poſſible to believe them written by the ſame

ſame hand that wrote your former letters. Do you think to ſtudy mankind by the confined behaviour of a few ſocieties of finical prude and other idlers? Do none of your remarks penetrate beyond the exterior and changeable varniſh which ought hardly to have engaged your attention? Was it worth while to collect with ſo much care thoſe peculiarities of manners and decorum, which ten years hence will no longer exiſt; while the unalterable ſprings of the human heart, the conſtant and ſecret workings of the paſſions, have eſcaped your reſearches? Let us turn to your letter concerning women: in what have you inſtructed me to know them? You have given indeed a deſcription of their dreſs, which all the world might be as well acquainted with; and have made ſome malicious obſervations on the addreſs and behaviour of ſome, as alſo of the irregularities of a few others, which you have unjuſtly attributed to them all, as if no perſon of virtuous ſentiments was to be found in Paris, and every woman flaunted about there in her chariot, and ſat in the front boxes. Have you told me any thing that can throw real light upon their true character, taſte, and maxims? and is it not ſtrange, that in deſcribing the women of a country, a man of ſenſe ſhould omit what regards their domeſtick concerns and education of their children*? The only circumſtance in that letter characteriſtick

* And why ſhould he not omit it? Have the women of theſe times any thing to do with concerns of this kind? What?

characteriſtick of its authour is the apparent ſatiſfaction with which you commend the goodneſs of their natural diſpoſition, which, I muſt confeſs, doth honour to your's. And yet, what have you done more in that than barely juſtice to the ſex in general? for in what country are not gentleneſs of manners and compaſſion for the diſtreſſed the amiable qualities of the women!

What a difference had there been in the picture, if you had deſcribed what you had ſeen, rather than what you had heard; or, at leaſt, if you had only conſulted people of ſenſe and ſolidity on the occaſion? Was it for you, who have taken ſo much pains to cultivate your genius, to throw away your time deliberately in the company of a parcel of inconſiderate young fellows, who take pleaſure in the ſociety of perſons of virtue and underſtanding, not to imitate but only to ſeduce and corrupt them? You lay a ſtreſs on the equality of age, with which you ſhould have nothing to do, and forget that of ſenſe and knowledge, which is more peculiarly eſſential. In ſpite of your violent paſſions, you are certainly the moſt pliable man in the world; and, notwithſtanding the ripeneſs of your judgement, permit yourſelf to be conducted ſo implicitly by thoſe you converſe with, that you cannot keep company

What would become of us and the ſtate? What would become of our celebrated authours, our illuſtrious academicians, if the ladies ſhould give up the direction of matters of literature and buſineſs, and apply themſelves only to the affairs of their family?

company with young people of your own age without condeſcending to become a mere infant in their hands. Thus you miſtake in your choice of proper companions, and debaſe yourſelf in not fixing upon ſuch as have more underſtanding than yourſelf.

I do not reproach you with having been inadvertently taken into a diſhoneſt houſe; but with having been conducted thither by a party of young officers, who ought never to have known you; or at leaſt whom you ſhould never have permitted to direct your amuſements. With reſpect to your project of making them converts to your own principles, I diſcover in it more zeal than prudence; if you are of too ſerious a turn to be their companion, you are too young to be their tutor, and you ought not to think of reforming others till there is nothing left to reform in yourſelf.

The next fault, which is of more moment and leſs pardonable, is to have paſſed voluntarily the evening in a place ſo unworthy of you, and not to have left the houſe the moment you knew what it was. Your excuſes on this head are mean and pitiful. You ſay *it was too late to recede*, as if any decorum were neceſſary to be obſerved in ſuch a place, or as if decorum ought ever to take place of virtue, and that it were ever too late to abſtain from doing evil. As to the ſecurity you found in your averſion to the manners of ſuch a company, I will ſay nothing of it; the event has ſhown you how well it was

founded.

founded. Speak more freely to one who ſo well knows how to read your heart; ſay you were aſhamed to leave your companions; you were afraid they would laugh at you; a momentary hiſs ſtruck you with fear, and you had rather expoſe yourſelf to the bitterneſs of remorſe than the tartneſs of raillery. Do you know what a maxim you followed on this occaſion? that which firſt vitiates every innocent mind, drowns the voice of conſcience in publick clamour, and repreſſes the reſolution of doing well by the fear of cenſure. Such a mind may overcome temptations, and yet yield to the force of bad examples; may bluſh at being really modeſt, and become impudent through baſhfulneſs; a falſe baſhfulneſs that is more deſtructive to a virtuous mind than bad inclinations. Look well then to the ſecurity of your's; for, whatever you may pretend, the fear of ridicule, which you affect to deſpiſe, prevails over you, in ſpite of yourſelf. You would ſooner face a hundred dangers than one raillery, and never was ſeen ſo much timidity united to ſo intrepid a mind.

Not to make a parade of precepts which you know better than I, I ſhall content myſelf with propoſing a method more eaſy and ſure, perhaps, than all the arguments of philoſophy. This is, on ſuch occaſions, to make in thought a ſlight tranſpoſition of circumſtances, to anticipate a few minutes of time. If, at that unfortunate ſupper, you had but fortified yourſelf againſt a moment's raillery, by the idea of the ſtate of

mind

mind you ſhould be in as ſoon as you got into the ſtreet: had you repreſented to yourſelf that inward contentment you would feel at having eſcaped the ſnares laid for you, the conſciouſneſs of having avoided the danger, the pleaſure it would give you to write me an account of it, that which I ſhould myſelf receive in reading it: had you, I ſay, called theſe circumſtances to mind, is it to be ſuppoſed they would not have overbalanced the mortification of being laughed at for a moment; a mortification you would never have dreaded, could you but have foreſeen the conſequences? But what is this mortification, which gives conſequence to the raillery of people for whom one has no eſteem? This reflexion would infallibly have ſaved you, in return for a moment's imaginary diſgrace, much real and more durable ſhame, remorſe, and danger: it would have ſaved (for why ſhould I diſſemble!) your friend, your Eloiſa, many tears.

You determined, you tell me, to apply that evening to obſervation. What an employment! what obſervation! I bluſh for your excuſes. Will you not alſo, when an opportunity offers, have the ſame curioſity to make obſervation on robbers in their dens? And to ſee the methods they take to ſeiſe their prey, and ſtrip the unhappy paſſengers that fall into their hands? Are you ignorant that there are objects too deteſtable for a man of probity to look on, and that the indignation of virtue cannot ſupport the ſight of vice?

The philoſopher remarks indeed the publick licentiouſneſs which he cannot prevent; he ſees it, and his countenance betrays the concern it gives him: but as to that of individuals, he either oppoſes it, or turns away his eyes from the ſight, leſt he ſhould give it a ſanction by his preſence. May I not aſk beſides what neceſſity there was to be eye-witneſs of ſuch ſcenes, in order to judge of what paſſed, or the converſation that was held there? For my part, I can judge more eaſily of the whole, from the intention and deſign of ſuch a ſociety, than from the little you tell me of it; and the idea of thoſe pleaſures that are to be found there, gives me a ſufficient inſight into the characters of ſuch as go to ſeek them.

I know not if your commodious ſcheme of philoſophy has already adopted the maxims, which, it is ſaid, are eſtabliſhed in large towns, for the toleration of ſuch places: but I hope, at leaſt, you are not one of thoſe who debaſe themſelves ſo much as to put them in practice, under the pretext of I know not what chimerical neceſſity, that is known only to men of debauched lives; as if the two ſexes were in this reſpect of a different conſtitution; and that, during abſence or celibacy, a virtuous man is under a neceſſity of indulging himſelf in liberties which are denied to a modeſt woman. But if this error does not lead you to proſtitutes, I am afraid it will continue to lead your imagination aſtray. Alas! if you are determined to be deſpicable, be

ſo

ſo at leaſt without pretext: and add not the vice of lying to that of drunkenneſs. All thoſe pretended neceſſities have no foundation in nature, but in the voluntary depravation of the ſenſes. Even the fond illuſions of love are refined by a chaſte mind, and pollute it only when the heart is firſt depraved. On the contrary, chaſtity is its own ſupport; the deſires conſtantly repreſſed accuſtom themſelves to remain at reſt, and temptations are only multiplied by the habit of yielding to them. Friendſhip has made me twice overcome the reluctance I had to write on ſuch a ſubject, and this ſhall be the laſt time; for on what plea can I hope to obtain that influence over you, which you have refuſed to virtue, to love, and to reaſon?

But I return to the important point with which I began this letter: at one-and-twenty years of age you ſent me from the Valais grave and judicious deſcriptions of men and things: at twenty-five you write me from Paris a pack of trifling letters, wherein good ſenſe is ſacrificed to a certain quaintneſs and pleaſantry, very incompatible with your character. I know not how you have managed; but ſince you have reſided among people of refined talents, your's appear to be diminiſhed: you profited among clowns, and have loſt by the wits. This is not, however, the fault of the place you are in, but of the acquaintance you have made: for nothing requires a greater judgement than to make a proper choice in a mixture of the excellent and exe-

crable. If you would ſtudy the world, keep company with men of ſenſe, who have known it by long experience, and obſervations made at leiſure, not with giddy-headed boys, who ſee only the ſuperficies of things, and laugh at what they themſelves make ridiculous. Paris is full of ſenſible men, accuſtomed to reflexion, and to whom every day repreſents a fertile field for obſervation. You will never make me believe that ſuch grave and ſtudious perſons run about, as you do, from houſe to houſe, and from club to club, to divert the women and young fellows, and turn all philoſophy into chit-chat. They have too much dignity thus to debaſe their characters, proſtitute their talents, and give a ſanction by their example to modes which they ought to correct. But, if even moſt of them ſhould, there are certainly many who do not, and it is thoſe you ought to have choſen for companions.

Is it not extraordinary that you ſhould fall into the very ſame error in your behaviour, which you blame in the writings of the comick poets? from which you ſay one would imagine Paris was peopled only by perſons of diſtinction. Theſe are your conſtant theme, while thoſe of your own rank eſcape your notice; as if the ridiculous prejudices of nobility had not coſt you ſufficiently dear to make you hate them for ever; or that you thought you degraded yourſelf in keeping company with honeſt citizens and tradeſmen, the moſt reſpectable order of men,

men, perhaps, in the whole country. It is in vain you endeavour to excuſe yourſelf, in that your acquaintance are thoſe of Lord B———: with the aſſiſtance of theſe you might eaſily have made others of an inferiour rank. So many people are deſirous to riſe, that it is always eaſy to deſcend; and by your own confeſſion, the only way to come at the true manners of a nation is to ſtudy the private life of the moſt numerous order among them; for to confine your obſervations to thoſe who only perſonate aſſumed characters is only to obſerve the actions of a company of commedians.

I would have your curioſity exerted ſtill farther. How comes it, that in ſo opulent a city the poor people are ſo miſerable; while ſuch extreme diſtreſs is hardly ever experienced among us, where, on the other hand, we have no examples of immenſe wealth? This queſtion is, in my opinion, well worth your aſking; but it is not the people you converſe with that are to reſolve it. It is in the ſplendid apartments of the rich that the novice goes to learn the manners of the world; but the man of ſenſe and experience betakes himſelf to the cottages of the poor. Theſe are the places for the detection of thoſe iniquitous practices, that in polite circles are varniſhed over and hid beneath a ſpecious ſhow of words. It is here that the rich and powerful, by coming to the knowledge of the baſeſt arts of oppreſſion, feel for the unhappy what in publick they only affect. If I may believe

lieve our old officers, you will learn many things in the garrets of a fifth floor, which are buried in profound ſilence at the *hotels* in the ſuburbs of St. Germain's: you will find that many fine talkers would be ſtruck dumb, if all thoſe they have made unhappy were preſent to contradict their boaſted pretenſions to humanity.

I know the ſight of miſery that excites only fruitleſs pity is diſagreeable; and that even the rich turn away their eyes from the unhappy objects to whom they refuſe relief: but money is not the only thing the unfortunate ſtand in need of; and they are but indolent in well-doing who can exert themſelves only with their purſe in their hands. Conſolation, advice, concern, friends, protection, theſe are all ſo many reſources which compaſſion points out to thoſe who are not rich, for relief of the indigent. The oppreſſed often ſtand in need only of a tongue to make known their complaints. They often want no more than a word they cannot ſpeak, a reaſon they are aſhamed to give, to gain enterance at the door of a great man. The intrepid countenance of diſintereſted virtue may remove infinite obſtacles, and the eloquence of a man of probity makes even a tyrant tremble in the midſt of his guards.

If you would then act as a man, learn to deſcend again. Humanity, like a pure ſalutary ſtream, flows always downwards to its level; fertilizing the humble vales, while it leaves dry thoſe barren rocks, whoſe threatening heads caſt a fright-

a frightful ſhade, or tumbling headlong down involve the plain in ruins.

Thus, my friend, may you make uſe of the paſt conduct, by drawing thence inſtructions for the future; and learn how goodneſs of heart may be of advantage to the underſtanding: whoever lives among people in office cannot be too cautious of the corruptible maxims they inculcate; and it is only the conſtant exerciſe of their benevolence that can ſecure the beſt hearts from the contagion of ambition. Try this new kind of ſtudy; it is more worthy of you than thoſe you have hitherto adopted; and, believe me, as the genius is impoveriſhed in proportion as the mind is corrupted, you will ſoon find, on the contrary, how much the practice of virtue elevates and improves it: you will experience how much the intereſt you take in the misfortunes of others will aſſiſt you in tracing their ſource, and will thereby learn to eſcape the vices that produce them.

I ought to take all the freedom with you that friendſhip authoriſes in the critical ſituation in which you at preſent appear, leſt a ſecond ſtep towards debauchery ſhould plunge you beyond recovery, and that before you have time to recollect yourſelf. I cannot conceal from you, my friend, how much your ready and ſincere confeſſion has affected me; as I am ſenſible how much ſhame and confuſion it muſt have coſt you, and from thence how heavy this piece of ill-

conduct muſt ſit upon your heart; an involuntary crime, however, is eaſily forgiven and forgot. But, for the future, remember well that maxim, from which I ſhall never recede; he who is a ſecond time deceived on theſe occaſions cannot be ſaid to have been deceived the firſt.

Adieu! my friend; be careful, I conjure you, of your health; and be aſſured I ſhall not retain the leaſt rememberance of a fault I have once forgiven.

P. S.—I have ſeen in the hands of Mr. Orbe the copies of ſeveral of your letters to Lord B——, which oblige me to retract part of the cenſure I have paſſed on the matter and manner of your obſervations. Theſe letters, I muſt confeſs, treat of important ſubjects, and appear to be full of ſerious and judicious reflexions. But hence it is evident, that you either treat my couſin and me diſdainfully, or that you ſet little value on our eſteem, in ſending us ſuch trivial relations as might juſtly forfeit it, while you tranſmit ſo much better to your friend. It is, in my opinion, doing little honour to your inſtructions to think your ſcholars unworthy to admire your talents: for you ought to affect, at leaſt, were it only through vanity, to think us capable of it.

I own political matters are not proper ſubjects for women: and my uncle has tired us with them ſo heartily, that I can eaſily conceive you were afraid of doing ſo too. To ſpeak freely alſo, theſe are not the topicks I prefer: their utility

lity is too foreign to affect me, and their arguments too ſubtile to make any laſting impreſſion Bound to reſpect the government under which it is my fate to have been born, I give myſelf no trouble to enquire whether there are any better. To what end ſhould I be inſtructed in the knowledge of government, who has ſo little power to eſtabliſh them? And why ſhould I afflict myſelf with the conſideration of evils too great for me to remedy, when I am ſurrounded with others that are in my power to redreſs? But, from my love to you, the intereſt I ſhould not take in the ſubject, I ſhould take in the writer. I collect with a pleaſing admiration all the fruits of your genius; and, proud of merit ſo deſerving of my heart, I beſeech of love only ſo much wit as to make me reliſh your's. Refuſe me not then the pleaſure of knowing and admiring your works of merit. Will you mortify me ſo much as to give me reaſon to think that, if heaven ſhould ever unite us, you will not judge your companion worthy to know and adopt your ſentiments?

LETTER XCIII.

FROM ELOISA.

WE are undone! all is diſcovered! your letters are gone! they were there laſt night, and could have been taken away but to-day. It is my mother: it can be nobody elſe. If my father ſhould ſee them, my life is in danger. But why ſhould he not ſee them, if I muſt renounce—

renounce—Heavens! my mother ſends for me. Whither ſhall I fly? How ſhall I ſupport her preſence? O that I could hide myſelf in the centre of the earth! I tremble every limb, and am unable to move one ſtep—the ſhame, the mortification, the killing reproaches—I have deſerved it, I will ſupport it all. But, oh! the grief, the tears of a weeping mother—O my heart, how piercing!—ſhe waits for me—I can ſtay no longer—ſhe will know—I muſt tell her all—Regianino will be diſmiſſed. Write no more till you hear further—who knows if ever—yet I might—what? deceive her!——deceive my mother!—alas! if our ſafety lies in ſupporting a falſehood, farewell, we are indeed undone!

LETTER XCIV.

FROM MRS. ORBE.

OH! how you afflict all thoſe who love you! what tears have already been ſhed on your account in an unfortunate family, whoſe tranquillity has been diſturbed by you alone! Dread to add to theſe tears by covering us with mourning; tremble leſt the death of an afflicted parent ſhould be the laſt effect of the poiſon you have poured into the heart of her child, and that your extravagant paſſion will at length fill you with eternal remorſe. My friendſhip made me ſupport your folly, while it was capable of being nouriſhed by the ſhadow of hope; but how can it allow a vain conſtancy condemned by honour *and reaſon*, and which, producing nothing but

pain

pain and misfortune, can only deſerve the name of obſtinacy?

You know in what manner the ſecret of your paſſion, ſo long concealed from the ſuſpicions of my aunt, has been diſcovered by your letters. How ſenſibly muſt ſuch a ſtroke be felt by a tender and virtuous mother, leſs irritated againſt you than againſt herſelf! She blames her blind negligence, ſhe deplores her fatal deluſion; her deepeſt affliction ariſes from her having had too high an eſteem for her daughter; and her grief has filled Eloiſa with a hundred times more ſorrow than all her reproaches.

My poor couſin's diſtreſs is not to be conceived. No idea can be formed of it without ſeeing her. Her heart ſeems ſtifled with grief, and the violence of the ſenſations by which it is oppreſſed gives an air of ſtupidity more terrifying than the moſt piercing cries. She continues night and day by her mother's bed, with a mournful look, her eyes fixed on the floor, and profoundly ſilent; yet ſerving her with greater attention and vivacity than ever; then inſtantly relapſing into a ſtate of dejection, ſhe appears to be no longer the ſame perſon. It is very evident, that the mother's illneſs ſupports the ſpirits of her daughter; and if an ardent deſire to ſerve her did not give her ſtrength, the extinguiſhed luſtre of her eyes, her paleneſs, her extreme grief, make me apprehenſive ſhe would ſtand in great need of the aſſiſtance ſhe beſtows. My aunt likewiſe perceives it; and I ſee, from the earneſtneſs with which ſhe recommends Eloiſa's

health to my care, how her poor heart is agitated and how much reaſon we have to hate you for diſturbing ſuch a pleaſing union.

This anxiety is ſtill increaſed by the care of hiding from a paſſionate father a dangerous ſecret, which the mother, who trembles for the life of her daughter, would conceal. She has reſolved to obſerve in his preſence their former familiarity; but if maternal tenderneſs with pleaſure takes advantage of this pretext, a daughter filled with confuſion dares not yield her heart to careſſes which ſhe believes feigned, and which are the more painful, in proportion as they would be engaging, could ſhe preſume to think them real. At the fond careſſes of her father ſhe looks towards her mother with an air ſo tender, and ſo humble, that ſhe ſeems to ſay: Ah! why am I not ſtill worthy of your tenderneſs?

In my frequent converſations with the Baroneſs d'Etange I could eaſily find by the mildneſs of her reprimands, and by the tone in which ſhe ſpoke of you, that Eloiſa has endeavoured, to the utmoſt of her power, to calm her too juſt indignation, and that ſhe has ſpared no pains to juſtify us both at her own expenſe. Even your letters, beſide a violent paſſion, contain a kind of excuſe which has not eſcaped her: ſhe reproaches you leſs for abuſing her confidence, than ſhe does her own weakneſs for putting it in your power. She has ſuch an eſteem for you, as to believe that no other man in your place would have made a better reſiſtance; and that your faults even ſpring from virtue. She now, ſhe ſays, perceives the

vanity

vanity of that boaſted probity which does not ſecure a perſon in love, who is in other reſpects a worthy man, from the guilt of corrupting a virtuous girl, and without ſcruple diſhonouring a whole family, to indulge a momentary madneſs. But to what purpoſe do we recur to what is paſt? our preſent buſineſs is to conceal, under an everlaſting veil, this odious myſtery; to efface, if poſſible, the leaſt veſtige of it, and to ſecond the goodneſs of heaven, which has left no viſible proof of your folly. The ſecret is confined to ſix ſafe perſons. The repoſe of all you have loved, the life of a mother reduced to deſpair, the honour of a reſpectable family, your own virtue, all theſe ſtill depend on you, all theſe point out your duty: you may repair the evil you have done, you may render yourſelf worthy of Eloiſa, and juſtify her fault, by renouncing your pretenſions. If I am not deceived in my opinion of your heart, nothing but the greatneſs of ſuch a ſacrifice can be equal to the love that renders it neceſſary. Relying on the ſublimity of your ſentiments, I have promiſed, in your name, every thing you ought to perform: dare to undeceive me, if I have preſumed too much on your merit, or be now what you ought to be. It is neceſſary to ſacrifice either your miſtreſs or your love, and to ſhow yourſelf the moſt abject, or the moſt virtuous of mankind.

This unfortunate mother reſolved to write to you: ſhe even began the painful taſk. Oh! what ſtabs would her bitter complaints have given you! how would her affecting reproaches have wounded

wounded your heart! and her humble entreaties have filled you with ſhame! I have torn in pieces this diſtreſsful letter, which you would never have been able to ſupport. I could not endure the prepoſterous ſight of a mother humbling herſelf before the ſeducer of her child; you are worthy, at leaſt, that we ſhould not uſe means that would rend a heart of adamant, and drive to the extremes of deſpair a man of uncommon ſenſibility.

Were this the firſt effort love had demanded from you, I might doubt of the ſucceſs, and heſitate as to the degree of eſteem you deſerve: but the ſacrifice you have made to the honour of Eloiſa, by quitting this country, is a pledge of that you are going to make to her repoſe, by putting a ſtop to an uſeleſs correſpondence. The firſt efforts of virtue are always the moſt painful, and you will loſe the advantage of that which has coſt you ſo dear, by obſtinately maintaining a vain correſpondence, attended with ſuch danger to her you love, without the leaſt advantage to either of you; and which can only ſerve to prolong the torments to both. No longer doubt it; it is become abſolutely neceſſary that this Eloiſa who was ſo dear to you ſhould be forgotten by the man ſhe loved ſo well: in vain you diſſemble your misfortunes, ſhe was loſt to you at the moment you left her; or, rather, heaven diſpoſed of her, before ſhe gave herſelf to you; for her father had promiſed her to another before his return, and you too well know

that

that the promiſe of that inexorable man is irrevocable. In what manner ſoever you regulate your conduct, your deſires are oppoſed by an inevitable fate, and you can never poſſeſs her. The only choice you have left, is either to plunge her into an abyſs of misfortunes and reproach, or to honour what you have adored, and reſtore to her, inſtead of the happineſs ſhe has loſt, at leaſt, the prudence, peace, and ſafety of which ſhe has been deprived by her fatal connexion with you.

How would you be afflicted, how would you be ſtung with remorſe, could you contemplate the real ſtate of my unhappy friend, and the abaſement to which ſhe is reduced by remorſe and ſhame! How is her luſtre tarniſhed, how languid all her gracefulneſs! How are all her noble and engaging ſentiments unhappily abſorbed in this one paſſion! Her friendſhip itſelf is cooled; ſcarcely does ſhe partake of the pleaſure I feel when we meet: her ſick heart is only ſenſible of love and grief. Alas! what is become of that fondneſs and ſenſibility, of that delicacy of taſte, of that tender intereſt in the pains and pleaſures of others? She is ſtill I confeſs mild, generous, compaſſionate; the amiable habit of doing well cannot be effaced, but it is only a blind habit, a taſte without reflexion. Her actions are the ſame, but they are not performed with the ſame zeal; thoſe ſublime ſentiments are weakened, that divine flame is extinguiſhed, this angel is now no more than woman. Oh! what a noble mind have you ſeduced from the path of virtue!

LETTER

LETTER XCV.

TO THE BARONESS D'ETANGE.

OVERWHELMED with ſorrow, I throw myſelf at your feet; not to ſhow a repentance that is out of my power, but to expiate an involuntary crime, by renouncing all that could render life a bleſſing. As no human paſſion ever equalled that inſpired by your celeſtial daughter, never was there a ſacrifice equal to that I am going to make to the moſt reſpectable of mothers; but Eloiſa has too well taught me how to ſacrifice happineſs to duty; ſhe has too couragiouſly ſet me the example, for me, at leaſt in one inſtance, not to imitate her. Were my blood capable of removing your diſtreſs, I would ſhed it in ſilence, and complain of being able to give you only ſo feeble a proof of my affection; but to break the moſt ſweet, the moſt pure, the moſt ſacred bond that ever united two hearts, is, alas! an effort which the whole univerſe could not oblige me to make, and which you alone could obtain.

Yes, I promiſe to live far from her, as long as you require it: I will abſtain from ſeeing and writing to her; this I ſwear by your precious life, ſo neceſſary to the preſervation of her's. I ſubmit, not without horrour, but without murmuring, to whatever you condeſcend to enjoin her and me. I will even add, that her happineſs is capable of alleviating my miſery, and that I

ſhall

ſhall die contented, if you give her a huſband worthy of her. Oh! let him be found, and let him dare to tell me that his paſſion for Eloiſa is greater than mine! In vain may he have every thing that I want; if he has not my heart, he has nothing for Eloiſa; but I have only this honeſt and tender heart. Alas! I have nothing more. Love, which levels all, exalts not the perſon; it elevates only the ſentiments. Oh! had I dared to liſten to mine for you, how often would my lips have pronounced the tender name of mother in addreſſing you!

Deign to confide in oaths, which ſhall not be vain, and in a man who is not a deceiver. If I ever diſhonour your eſteem, I muſt firſt diſhonour myſelf. My unexperienced heart knew not the danger, till it was too late to fly: I had not then learned of your daughter the cruel art ſhe has ſince taught me, of conquering love with its own weapons. Baniſh your fears, I conjure you. Is there a perſon in the world to whom her repoſe, her felicity, her honour, is dearer than it is to me? No, my word and my heart are ſecurities for the engagement into which I now enter, both in my own name, and in that of my lovely friend. Aſſure yourſelf that no indiſcreet word ſhall ever paſs my lips, and that I will breathe my laſt ſigh without divulging the cauſe of my death. Calm, therefore, that affliction which conſumes you, and which adds infinitely to my ſufferings; dry up the tears that pierce my very ſoul; try to recover your health;

reſtore to the moſt affectionate daughter the world ever produced the happineſs ſhe has renounced for you: be happy; live, that ſhe may value life; for, regardleſs of our misfortunes, to be the mother of Eloiſa, is ſtill ſufficient cauſe for happineſs.

LETTER XCVI.

TO MRS. ORBE,

With the preceding Letter encloſed.

THERE, cruel friend! is my anſwer. When you read it, if you know my heart, you will burſt into tears, unleſs your's has loſt its ſenſibility; but no longer overwhelm me with that mercileſs eſteem which I ſo dearly purchaſe, and which ſerves but to increaſe my torture.

Has your barbarous hand then dared to break the gentle union formed under your eye, even almoſt from infancy, and which your friendſhip ſeemed to ſhare with ſo much pleaſure? I am now as wretched as you would have me, and as there is a poſſibility of being. Do you conceive all the evil you have done? Are you ſenſible that you have torn me from my ſoul? that what I have loſt is beyond redemption, and that it is better to die an hundred times, than not to live for each other? Why do you urge the happineſs of Eloiſa? can ſhe be happy without contentment? Why do you mention the danger of her mother?

mother? ah! what is the life of a mother; of mine, of your's, of her's itſelf? what is the exiſtence of the whole world, to the delightful ſenſation by which we were united? O ſenſeleſs and ſavage virtue! I obey thy unmeaning voice. I abhor thee, while I ſacrifice all to thy dictates. What avail thy vain conſolations againſt the diſtreſsful agonies of the ſoul? Go, thou ſullen idol of the unhappy, thou only ſerveſt to augment their miſery by depriving them of the reſources which fortune offers. Yet I obey; yes, cruel friend, I obey. I will become, if poſſible, as inſenſible and ſavage as yourſelf. I will forget every thing upon earth that was dear to me. I will no longer hear or pronounce Eloiſa's name, or your's. I will no more recall their inſupportable remberance. An inflexible vexation and rage ſhall preſerve me from ſuch misfortunes. A ſteady obſtinacy ſhall ſupply the place of courage: I have paid too dearly for my ſenſibility; it were better to renounce humanity itſelf.

LETTER XCVII.

FROM MRS. ORBE.

YOUR letter is indeed extremely pathetick; but there is ſo much love and virtue in your conduct, that it effaces the bitterneſs of your complaints: you are ſo generous that I have not the courage to quarrel with you; for whatever

whatever extravagancies we may commit, if we are ſtill capable of ſacrificing all that is dear to us, we deſerve praiſe rather than reproach; therefore, notwithſtanding your abuſe, you never was ſo dear to me as ſince you have made me ſo fully ſenſible of your worth.

Return thanks to that virtue you believe you hate, and which does more for you than even your love. There is not one of us, not even my aunt, whom you have not gained by a ſacrifice, the value of which ſhe well knows. She could not read your letter without melting into tears: ſhe had even the weakneſs to ſhow it to her daughter; but poor Eloiſa's endeavours while ſhe read it, to ſtifle her ſighs and tears, quite overcame her, and ſhe fainted away.

This tender mother, whom your letters had already greatly affected, begins to perceive, from every circumſtance, that your hearts are of a ſuperior mould, and that they are diſtinguiſhed by a natural ſympathy, which neither time nor human efforts will ever be able to efface. She who ſtands in ſuch need of conſolation would herſelf freely conſole her daughter, if prudence did not reſtrain her; and I ſee her too ready to become her confidante, to fear that ſhe can be angry with me. Yeſterday I heard her ſay, even before Eloiſa, perhaps a little indiſcreetly, "Ah! if it only depended on me!"—and though ſhe ſaid no more, I perceived, by a kiſs which Eloiſa impreſſed on her hand, that ſhe too well underſtood her meaning. I am even certain that ſhe

was

was ſeveral times inclined to ſpeak to her inflexible huſband; but whether the danger of expoſing her daughter to the fury of an enraged father, or whether it was fear for herſelf, her timidity has hitherto kept her ſilent; and her illneſs increaſes ſo faſt, that I am afraid ſhe will never be able to execute her half-performed reſolution.

However, notwithſtanding the faults of which you are the cauſe, that integrity of heart, viſible in your mutual affection, has given her ſuch an opinion of you, that ſhe confides in the promiſe you have both made, of diſcontinuing your correſpondence, and has not taken any precaution to have her daughter more cloſely watched: indeed, if Eloiſa makes an ill return to her confidence, ſhe will no longer be worthy of her affection. You would both deſerve the ſevereſt treatment, if you were capable of deceiving the beſt of mothers, and of abuſing her eſteem.

I ſhall not endeavour to revive in your mind the hopes which I myſelf do not entertain; but I would ſhow you, that the moſt honeſt is alſo the wiſeſt part, and that if you have any reſource left, it is in the ſacrifice which reaſon and honour require. Mother, relations, and friends are now all for you, except the father, who will by this method be gained over, if any thing can do it. Whatever imprecations you may utter in the moment of deſpair, you have a hundred times proved to us, that there is no path more ſure of leading to happineſs than that of virtue. Therefore, reſume your courage, and be a man! be yourſelf.

If I am well acquainted with your heart, the moſt cruel manner of loſing Eloiſa would be by rendering yourſelf unworthy of her.

LETTER XCVIII.

FROM ELOISA.

SHE is no more! my eyes have ſeen her's cloſed for ever; my lips have received her laſt ſigh; my name was the laſt word ſhe pronounced; her laſt look was fixed on me. No, 'twas not life ſhe ſeemed to quit; too little had I known how to render that valuable! From me alone ſhe was torn. She ſaw me without a guide, and void of hope, overwhelmed by my misfortunes and my crime: to her, death was nothing; ſhe grieved only to leave her daughter in ſuch a ſtate of miſery. She had but too much reaſon. What had ſhe to regret on earth? What could there be here below, in her eye, worth the immortal prize of patience and virtue, reſerved for her in a better world? What had ſhe to do on earth, but to lament my ſhame? Oh! moſt incomparable woman! thou now dwelleſt in the abode of glory and felicity! thou liveſt; whilſt I, given up to repentance and deſpair, deprived for ever of thy care, of thy counſel, of thy ſweet careſſes, am dead to happineſs, to peace, to innocence! Nothing do I feel but thy loſs; nothing do I ſee but my reproach: my life is only pain and grief. Oh my dear, my tender mother! alas! I am more dead than thou art!

Good

Good God! to whom do I ſhed theſe tears, and vent theſe ſighs? The cruel man who cauſed them I make my confidant! With him, who has rendered my life unhappy, I dare to deplore my misfortunes! Yes, yes, barbarous as you are, ſhare the torments you have made me ſuffer. You, for whom I have plunged the poignard into a mother's boſom, tremble at the misfortunes you have occaſioned, and ſhudder with me at the horrid act you have committed. To what eye dare I preſume to appear as deſpicable as I really am? Before whom ſhall I degrade myſelf to the bent of my remorſe? To whom, but to the accomplice of my crime, can I ſufficiently make it known? It is my inſupportable puniſhment, to have no accuſer but my own heart, and to ſee attributed to the goodneſs of my diſpoſition the impure tears that flow from a bitter repentance. I ſaw, I trembling ſaw, the poiſonous ſorrow put a period to the life of my unhappy mother. In vain did her pity for me prevent her confeſſing it; in vain ſhe affected to attribute the progreſs of her illneſs to the cauſe by which it was produced; in vain was my couſin induced to talk in the ſame ſtrain. Nothing could deceive a heart torn with regret; and, to my laſting torment, I ſhall carry to my tomb the frightful idea of having ſhortened her life, to whom I am indebted for my own.

O thou, whom heaven in its anger raiſed up to render me guilty and unhappy, for the laſt time receive into thy boſom the tears thou haſt

occaſioned! I come not, as formerly, to ſhare with thee the grief that ought to be mutual. Theſe are the ſighs of a laſt adieu, which eſcape from me in ſpite of myſelf. It is done: the empire of love is ſubdued in a ſoul condemned wholly to deſpair. I will conſecrate the reſt of my days to lamentation for the beſt of mothers. To her I will ſacrifice that paſſion which was the cauſe of her death: happy ſhall I be, if the painful conqueſt be ſufficient to expiate my guilt! Oh! if her immortal mind penetrates into the bottom of my heart, ſhe will know that the ſacrifice I make is not entirely unworthy of her! Share with me then an effort which you have rendered neceſſary. If you have any reſpect remaining for the memory of an union, once ſo dear and fatal, by that I conjure you to fly from me for ever; no more to write to me; no more to aggravate my remorſe; but ſuffer me to forget, if poſſible, our former connexion. May my eyes never behold you more! may I never more hear your name pronounced! may the rememberance of you never more agitate my mind! I dare ſtill intreat, in the name of that love which ought never to have exiſted, that to ſo many cauſes of grief you add not that of ſeeing my laſt requeſt deſpiſed. Adieu then for the laſt time, dear and only——Ah! fool that I am——adieu for ever!

LETTER

LETTER XCIX.

TO MRS. ORBE.

AT laſt the veil is rent; the long illuſion is vaniſhed; all my flattering hopes are extinguiſhed; nothing is left to feed the eternal flame, but a bitter, yet pleaſing rememberance, which ſupports my life, and nouriſhes my torments, with the vain recollection of a happineſs that is now no more.

Is it then true that I have taſted ſupreme felicity? Am I the ſame being whoſe happineſs was once ſo perfect? Could any one be ſuſceptible of ſuch torments, who was not doomed to eternal miſery? Can he who has enjoyed the bleſſings I have loſt be deprived of felicity and ſtill exiſt? And can ſuch contrary ſenſations affect the ſame mind? O ye glorious and happy days, ſurely ye were immortal! ye were too celeſtial ever to periſh! your whole duration was one continued ecſtaſy, by which ye were converged like eternity into a ſingle point. I knew neither of paſt nor future, and I taſted at once the delights of a thouſand ages. Alas! ye are vaniſhed like a ſhadow! that eternity of happineſs was but an inſtant of my life. Time now reſumes his tardy pace, and ſlowly meaſures the ſad remains of my exiſtence.

To render my diſtreſs ſtill more inſupportable my increaſing affliction is cruelly aggravated by

the loſs of all that was dear to me. It is poſſible, Madam, that you have ſtill ſome regard for me: but you are buſied by other cares, and employed in other duties, Theſe my complaints, to which you once liſtened with concern, are now indiſcreet. Eloiſa! Eloiſa herſelf diſcourages and abandons me. Gloomy remorſe has baniſhed love for ever. All is changed with reſpect to me; except the ſtedfaſtneſs of my own heart, which ſerves but to render my fate ſtill more dreadful.

But, to what purpoſe is it to ſay what I am, and what I ought to be? Eloiſa ſuffers! is it a time to think of myſelf? her ſorrow adds bitterneſs to mine. Yes, I had rather ſhe would ceaſe to love me, and that ſhe were happy—Ceaſe to love me!—can ſhe—hope it?—never, never! She has indeed forbid me to ſee or write to her. Alas! ſhe removes the comforter, but never can the torment! Should the loſs of a tender mother deprive her of a ſtill more tender friend? Does ſhe think to alleviate her griefs by multiplying her misfortunes? O love! can nature be revenged only at thy expenſe? No, no; in vain ſhe pretends to forget me. Can her tender heart ever be ſeparated from mine? Do I not retain it in ſpite of herſelf? Are ſenſations like thoſe we have experienced to be forgotten, and can they be remembered without feeling them ſtill? Triumphant love was the bane of her felicity; and having conquered her paſſion, ſhe will only be the more deſerving of pity. Her days

days will paſs in ſorrow, tormented at once by vain regret and vain deſires, without ever being able to fulfil the obligations either of love or virtue.

Do not imagine, however, that in complaining of her errours, I ceaſe to reſpect them. After ſo many ſacrifices, it is too late for me to begin to diſobey. Since ſhe commands, it is ſufficient; ſhe ſhall hear of me no more. Is my fate now ſufficiently dreadful? Renounce my Eloiſa! yes, but that is not the chief cauſe of my deſpair; it is for her I feel the keeneſt pangs; and her misfortunes render me more miſerable than my own. You, whom ſhe loves more than all the world, and who, next to me, are beſt acquainted with her worth; you, my amiable friend, are the only bleſſing ſhe has left: a bleſſing ſo valuable as to render the loſs of all the reſt ſupportable. Be you her recompenſe for the comforts of which ſhe is deprived, and for thoſe alſo which ſhe rejects: let a ſacred friendſhip ſupply at once the tenderneſs of a parent and a lover, by adminiſtering every conſolation that may contribute to her happineſs. Oh! let her be happy, if ſhe can be ſo, how great ſoever the purchaſe! May ſhe ſoon recover the peace of mind of which I, alas! have robbed her; I ſhall then be leſs ſenſible of the torment to which I am doomed. Since in my own eyes I am nothing; ſince it is my fate to paſs my life in dying for her; let her regard me as already dead: I am ſatisfied, if this idea will add to her tranquillity. Heaven grant, that

by your kindneſs ſhe may be reſtored to her former excellence, and her former happineſs.

Unhappy daughter! alas, thy mother is no more! this is a loſs that cannot be repaired; and for which, ſo long as ſhe reproaches herſelf, ſhe can never be conſoled. Her troubled conſcience requires of her this dear and tender mother; and thus the moſt dreadful remorſe is added to her affliction. O Eloiſa! oughteſt thou to feel theſe terrible ſenſations? thou, who wert a witneſs of the ſickneſs and of the laſt moments of that unfortunate parent! I entreat, I conjure you to tell me what I ought to believe? If I am guilty, tear my heart in pieces: if our crimes were the cauſe of her death, we are two monſters unworthy of exiſtence, and it were a double crime to think of ſo fatal an union: Oh! it were even a crime to live! But, no; I cannot believe that ſo pure a flame could produce ſuch baleful effects. Surely the ſentiments of love are too noble. Can heaven be unjuſt? And could ſhe, who ſacrificed her happineſs to the authour of her life, ever deſerve to be the cauſe of her death?

LETTER C.

THE ANSWER.

HOW can I ceaſe to love you, when my eſteem for you is daily increaſing? How can I ſtifle my affection, whilſt you are growing every day more worthy of my regard? No, my

dear,

dear, my excellent friend! what we were to each other in early life we ſhall continue to be for ever; and if our mutual attachment no longer increaſes, it is becauſe it cannot be increaſed. All the difference is, that I then loved you as my brother, and that now I love you as my ſon; for though we are both younger than you, and were even your ſcholars, I now in ſome meaſure conſider you as our's. In teaching us to think, you have learnt of us ſenſibility; and whatever your Engliſh philoſopher may ſay, this education is more valuable than the other: if it is reaſon that conſtitutes the man, it is ſenſibility that conducts him.

Would you know why I have changed my conduct towards you? It is not, believe me, becauſe my heart is not ſtill the ſame; but becauſe your ſituation is changed. I favoured your paſſion, while there remained a ſingle ray of hope; but ſince, by obſtinately continuing to aſpire to Eloiſa, you can only make her unhappy; to flatter your expectations would be to injure you. I had even rather increaſe your diſcontent, and thus render you leſs deſerving of my compaſſion. When the happineſs of both becomes impoſſible, all that is left for a hopeleſs lover, is to ſacrifice his own to that of the object beloved.

This, my generous friend, you have performed in the moſt painful ſacrifice that ever was made; but, by renouncing Eloiſa, you will purchaſe her repoſe, though at the expenſe of your own.

I dare ſcarce repeat to you the ideas that occur to me on this ſubject; but they are fraught with conſolation, and that emboldens me. In the firſt place, I believe that true love, as well as virtue, has this advantage, that it is rewarded by every ſacrifice we make to it, and that we in ſome meaſure enjoy the privations we impoſe on ourſelves, in the very idea of what they coſt us, and of the motives by which we were induced. You will be ſenſible that your love for Eloiſa was in proportion to her merit; and that will increaſe your happineſs. The exquiſite ſelf-love, which knows how to reap advantage from painful virtue, will mingle its charm with that of love. You will ſay to yourſelf, I know how to love, with a pleaſure more durable and more delicate than even poſſeſſion itſelf would have afforded. The latter wears out the paſſion by conſtant enjoyment; but the other laſts for ever; and you will ſtill enjoy it, even when you ceaſe to love.

Beſides, if what Eloiſa and you have ſo often told me be true, that love is the moſt delightful ſenſation that can enter into the human heart, every thing that prolongs and fixes it, even at the expenſe of a thouſand vexations, is ſtill a bleſſing. If love is a deſire that is increaſed by obſtacles, as you ſtill ſay, it ought never to be ſatisfied; it is better to preſerve it at any rate, than that it ſhould be extinguiſhed in pleaſure. Your paſſion, I confeſs, has ſtood the proof of poſſeſſion, of time, of abſence, and of dangers

of

of every kind; it has conquered every obſtacle, except the moſt powerful of all, that of having nothing more to conquer, and of feeding only on itſelf. The world has never ſeen the paſſion ſtand this proof; what right have you then to hope that your's would have ſtood the teſt? Time, which might have joined to the diſguſt of a long poſſeſſion the progreſs of age, and the decline of beauty, ſeems by your ſeparation fixed and motionleſs in your favour; you will be always to each other in the bloom of your years; you will inceſſantly ſee her, as ſhe was when you beheld her at parting; and your hearts, united even to the grave, will prolong, by a charming illuſion, your youth and your love.

Had you never been happy, you might have been tormented by inſurmountable inquietudes; your heart might have panted after a felicity of which it was not unworthy; your warm imagination would have inceſſantly required that which you have not obtained. But love has no delights which you have not taſted, and in your own ſtile, you have exhauſted in one year the pleaſures of a whole life. Remember the paſſionate letter you wrote after a certain raſh interview. I read it with an emotion I had never before experienced: it had no traces of the permanent ſtate of a truely tender heart, but was filled with the laſt delirium of a mind inflamed with paſſion, and intoxicated with pleaſure. You yourſelf may judge that ſuch tranſports are not to be twice experienced in this life, and that death

ought immediately to ſucceed. This, my friend, was the ſummit of all; and whatever love or fortune might have done for you, your paſſion and your felicity muſt have declined. That inſtant was alſo the beginning of your diſgrace, and Eloiſa was taken from you, at the moment when ſhe could inſpire no new ſenſations, as if fate intended to ſecure your paſſion from being exhauſted, and to leave, in the rememberance of your paſt pleaſures, a pleaſure more ſweet than all thoſe you could now have enjoyed.

Comfort yourſelf then with the loſs of a bleſſing that would certainly have eſcaped you, and would beſides have deprived you of that you now poſſeſs. Happineſs and love would have vaniſhed at once; you have at leaſt preſerved that paſſion, and we are not without pleaſure, while we continue to love. The idea of extinguiſhed love is more terrifying to a tender heart, than that of an unhappy flame; and to feel a diſguſt for what we poſſeſs is an hundred times worſe than regretting what is loſt.

If the reproaches made you by my afflicted couſin, on the death of her mother, were well founded, the cruel rememberance would, I confeſs, poiſon that of your love, which ought for ever to be deſtroyed by ſo fatal an idea; but give no credit to her grief; it deceives her; or rather the cauſe to which ſhe would aſcribe her ſorrow is only a pretence to juſtify its exceſs. Her tender mind is always in fear that her affliction is not ſufficiently ſevere, and ſhe feels a kind of

of pleaſure in adding bitterneſs to her diſtreſs; but ſhe certainly impoſes on herſelf; ſhe cannot be ſincere.

Do you think ſhe could ſupport the dreadful remorſe ſhe would feel, if ſhe really believed ſhe had ſhortened her mother's life? No, no, my friend, ſhe would not then weep, ſhe would have ſunk with her into the grave. The Baroneſs d'Etange's diſeaſe is well known; it was a dropſy of the pericardium, which was incurable, and her life was deſpaired of, even before ſhe had diſcovered your correſpondence. I own it afflicted her much, but ſhe had great conſolation. How comfortable was it to that tender mother to ſee, while ſhe lamented the fault of her daughter, by how many virtues it was counterbalanced, and to be forced to admire the dignity of her ſoul, while ſhe lamented the weakneſs of nature! How pleaſing to perceive with what affection ſhe loved her! Such indefatigable zeal! ſuch continual ſollicitude! ſuch grief at having offended her! what regret, what tears, what affecting careſſes, what unwearied ſenſibility! In the eyes of the daughter were viſible all the mother's ſufferings; it was ſhe who ſerved her in the day, and watched her by night; it was from her hand that ſhe received every aſſiſtance: you would have thought her ſome other Eloiſa, for her natural delicacy diſappeared, ſhe was ſtrong and robuſt, the moſt painful ſervices cauſed no fatigue, and the intrepidity of her ſoul ſeemed to have created her a new

body. She did every thing, yet appeared to be unemployed; ſhe was every where, and yet rarely left her; ſhe was perpetually on her knees by the bed, with her lips preſſed to her mother's hand, bewailing her illneſs and her own misfortunes, and confounding theſe two ſenſations, in order to increaſe her affliction. I never ſaw any perſon enter my aunt's chamber, during the laſt days, without being moved even to tears at this moſt affecting ſpectacle, to behold two hearts more cloſely uniting, at the very moment when they were to be torn aſunder. It was viſible that their only cauſe of anguiſh was their ſeparation, and that to live or die would have been indifferent to either, could they have remained or departed together.

So far from adopting Eloiſa's gloomy ideas, aſſure yourſelf that every thing that could be hoped for from human aſſiſtance and conſolation have on her part concurred to retard the progreſs of her mother's diſeaſe, and that her tenderneſs and care have undoubtedly preſerved her longer with us than ſhe would otherwiſe have continued. My aunt herſelf has told me a hundred times that her laſt days were the ſweeteſt of her life, and that the happineſs of her daughter was the only thing wanting to complete her own.

If grief muſt be ſuppoſed in any degree to have haſtened her diſſolution it certainly ſprang from another ſource. It is to her huſband it ought to be aſcribed. Being naturally inconſtant, he laviſhed the fire of his youth on a thouſand objects

objects infinitely less pleasing than his virtuous wife; and when age brought him back to her, he treated her with that inflexible severity with which faithless husbands are accustomed to aggravate their faults. My poor cousin has felt the effects of it. An high opinion of his nobility, and that roughness of disposition which nothing can ever soften, have produced your misfortunes and her's. Her mother, who had always a regard for you, and who discovered Eloisa's love when it was too violent to be extinguished, had long secretly bemoaned the misfortune of not being able to conquer either the inclinations of her daughter, or the obstinacy of her husband, and of being the first cause of an evil which she could not remedy. When your letters unexpectedly fell into her hands, and she found how far you had misused her confidence, she was afraid of losing all by endeavouring to save all, and to hazard the life of her child in attempting to restore her honour. She several times sounded her husband without success. She often resolved to venture an entire confidence in him, and to show him the full extent of his duty; but she was always restrained by her timidity. She hesitated while it was in her power; and when she would have told him she was no longer able to speak; her strength failed her, she carried the fatal secret with her to the grave; and I who know his austerity, without having the least idea how far it may be tempered by natural

affection, am ſatisfied, ſince Eloiſa's life is in no danger.

All this ſhe knows; but you will aſk, what I think of her apparent remorſe? In anſwer to which I muſt tell you, that Love is more ingenuous than ſhe. Overcome with grief for the loſs of her mother, ſhe would willingly forget you; and, in ſpite of herſelf, Love diſturbs her conſcience, in order to bring you to her memory. He chooſes that her tears ſhould be connected with the object of her paſſion; but ſhe not daring to employ her thoughts directly on you, he deceives her into it under the maſk of repentance: thus he impoſes on her with ſo much art, that ſhe is willing to increaſe her woes, rather than baniſh you from her thoughts. Your heart may perhaps be ignorant of ſuch ſubterfuges, but they are not the leſs natural; for though your paſſion may be equal in degree, its nature is very different. Your's is warm and violent, her's ſoft and tender; your ſenſations are breathed forth with vehemence, but her's retort upon herſelf, and pierce her very inmoſt ſoul. Love animates and ſupports your heart, whilſt her's is oppreſſed and dejected with its weight; all its ſprings are relaxed, her ſtrength is gone, her courage is extinguiſhed, and her virtue has loſt its power. Her heroick faculties are not however annihilated, but ſuſpended: a momentary criſis may reſtore them to their full vigour, or totally deſtroy their exiſtence. One ſtep farther in this gloomy path and ſhe is loſt; but if her incomparable

rable ſoul ſhould recover herſelf, ſhe will be greater, more heroick, more virtuous than ever, and there will be no danger of a relapſe. Learn, then, in this perilous ſituation to revere the object of your love. Any thing that ſhould come from you, though it were againſt yourſelf, would at this time prove mortal. If you are determined to perſiſt, your triumph will be certain, but you will never poſſeſs the ſame Eloiſa.

LETTER CI.

FROM LORD B——

I Had ſome pretenſions to your friendſhip, you were become ſerviceable to me, and I was prepared to meet you. But what are my pretenſions, my neceſſities, or my eagerneſs to you? You have forgot me, you do not even deign to write to me. I am not ignorant of your ſolitude, nor of your ſecret deſign: you are weary of exiſtence. Die then, weak youth—yes, die, thou daring, yet cowardly mortal; but in thy laſt moments, remember that thou haſt ſtung the ſoul of thy ſincere friend with the reflexion of having ſerved an ungrateful man.

LETTER CII.

THE ANSWER.

YES, my kind friend, you may come. I was determined to taſte no more pleaſure upon earth, but we will meet once more. You

are

are wrong; it is as impoſſible that you ſhould meet with ingratitude, as that I ſhould ever be ungrateful.

BILLET.

FROM ELOISA.

IT is time to renounce the errours of youth, and to abandon an illuſive hope. I can never be your's. Reſtore to me that liberty of which my father chooſes to diſpoſe; or complete my miſery by a refuſal which will ruin me for ever, without producing any advantage to yourſelf.

Eloiſa Etange.

LETTER CIII.

FROM THE BARON D'ETANGE.

In which the preceding Billet was encloſed.

IF there remains in the mind of a ſeducer the leaſt ſentiment of honour or humanity, anſwer the billet of an unhappy girl, whoſe heart you have corrupted, and who ſhould no longer exiſt, if I could ſuppoſe her to have carried the forgetfulneſs of herſelf any farther. I ſhould not indeed be much ſurpriſed if the ſame philoſophy which taught her to catch at the firſt man ſhe ſaw, ſhould alſo inſtruct her to diſobey her father. Think of this matter. I always chooſe to proceed with lenity and decency, when theſe methods are likely to ſucceed; but becauſe I act thus

thus with you, you are not to ſuppoſe me ignorant in what manner a gentleman ſhould take revenge of thoſe beneath him.

LETTER CIV.

THE ANSWER.

LET me intreat you, Sir, to ſpare thoſe vain menaces, and that unjuſt reproach, which can neither terrify nor humble me. Between two perſons of the ſame age there can be no *ſeducer* but love, and you can have no right to vilify a man whom your daughter honoured with her eſteem.

What conceſſions do you expect, and from what authority are they demanded? Is it to the authour of all my misfortunes that I muſt ſacrifice my remaining glimpſe of hope? I will reſpect the father of Eloiſa; but let him deign to be mine if he expects obedience. No, Sir, what opinion ſoever you may entertain of your proceedings, they will not oblige me, for your ſake, to relinquiſh ſuch valuable and juſt pretenſions. As you are the ſole cauſe of my miſery, I owe you nothing but hatred; your pretenſions are without foundation. But Eloiſa commands: her I ſhall never diſobey; therefore, you have my conſent. Another may poſſeſs her, but I ſhall be more worthy.

If your daughter had deigned to conſult me concerning the limits of your authority, doubt

not

not but I would have taught her to diſregard your unjuſt pretenſions. How deſpotick ſoever may be the empire you aſſume, my rights are infinitely more ſacred. The chain by which we are united marks the extent of paternal dominion, even in the eſtimation of human laws, and whilſt you appeal to the law of nature, you yourſelf are trampling upon its inſtitutions.

Do not alledge that delicate phantom honour, which you ſeem ſo determined to vindicate; for here again you are the ſole offender. Reſpect Eloiſa's choice, and your honour is ſecure; for I honour you in my heart, regardleſs of your inſults. Notwithſtanding all your gothick maxims, one honeſt man was never diſhonoured by his alliance with another. If my preſumption offends you, attempt my life; againſt you I ſhall never defend it. As to the reſt, I am little anxious to know in what conſiſts the honour of a gentleman; but with regard to that of an honeſt man I own it concerns me, and therefore I ſhall defend and preſerve it pure and ſpotleſs to the end of my life.

Go, inhuman father, and meditate the deſtruction of your only child, whilſt ſhe, full of duty and affection, ſtands ready to yield her happineſs a victim to prejudice and opinion: but be aſſured your own remorſe will one day ſeverely revenge my injuries, and you will then perceive, when it is too late, that your blind and unnatural hatred was no more fatal to me than to yourſelf. That I ſhall be wretched is moſt certain;

certain; but if ever the juſt feelings of nature ſhould emerge from the bottom of your heart, how infinitely greater will be your unhappineſs in having ſacrificed the only daughter of your boſom to a mere phantom—a daughter who has no equal in beauty, merit, or virtue, and on whom indulgent heaven has beſtowed every bleſſing, except a kind father.

BILLET.

Encloſed in the foregoing.

I Reſtore to Eloiſa Etange the power to diſpoſe of herſelf, and to give her hand without conſulting her heart.

S. G.

LETTER CV.

FROM ELOISA.

I Deſigned to give you a deſcription of the ſcene which produced the billet you have received; but my father took his meaſures ſo artfully, that it ended only the inſtant before the poſt went out. His letter has certainly ſaved the mail as this will be too late; ſo that your reſolution will be taken, and your anſwer deſpatched, before it can poſſibly reach you: therefore, all detail would now be uſeleſs. I have done my duty; you will do your's: but fate will overwhelm us, and we are betrayed by honour. We are divided for ever! and to increaſe my horrour,

I am

I am going to be forced into the arms of —— O heavens! it was once in my power to live in thine. Juſt God!—we muſt tremble and be ſilent.

The pen falls from my hand. I have been of late much indiſpoſed. This morning's affair has hurt me not a little——Oh! my head, my poor heart!—I feel, I feel, I ſhall faint—Will heaven have no mercy on my ſufferings?——I am no longer able to ſupport myſelf——I will retire to my bed, and conſole myſelf in the hope of riſing no more. Adieu, my only love! adieu, for the laſt time, my dear, my tender friend!—Ah! I live no longer for thee! have I not then already ceaſed to live?

LETTER CVI.

FROM ELOISA TO MRS. ORBE.

CAN it be true, my dear, my cruel friend, that you have called me back to life and ſorrow? I ſaw the happy inſtant when I was going to be again united to the tendereſt of mothers; but your inhuman kindneſs has condemned me to bemoan her yet longer: when my deſire to follow her had almoſt ſnatched me from this earth, my unwillingneſs to leave you behind held me faſt. If I am at all reconciled to life, it is from the comfort of not having entirely eſcaped the hand of death. Thank heaven! that beauty is no more for which my heart has paid ſo dearly.

The

The diſtemper from which I am recovered has happily deprived me of it. This circumſtance I hope will abate the groſs ardour of a man ſo indelicate as to dare to marry me without my conſent. When the only thing which he admired no longer exiſts, ſurely he will be little anxious about the reſt. Without breach of promiſe to my father, without injuring that friend whoſe life is in his power, I ſhall be able to repulſe this importunate wretch: my lips will be ſilent, but my looks will ſpeak for me. His diſguſt will defend me againſt his tyranny, and he will find me too diſagreeable to dare to make unhappy.

Ah, my dear couſin! you know a conſtant tender heart that would not be ſo repulſed. His paſſion was not confined to outward form or charms of perſon; it was me that he loved, and not my face; we were united in every part of our being; and ſo long as Eloiſa had remained her beauty might have fled, but love would for ever have continued. And yet he could conſent ——ungrateful youth!——yet it was but juſt, ſince I could aſk it. Who would wiſh to retain by promiſe thoſe who would withdraw their heart! and did I attempt to withdraw mine? ——have I done it?——O heavens! why muſt every thing conſpire to remind me of times that are no more, and to increaſe a flame which ought to be extinguiſhed? In vain, Eloiſa, are thy endeavours to tear the dear image from thy heart it is too firmly attached; that heart itſelf would

firſt

firſt be torn in pieces, and all thy endeavours ſerve but to engrave it the deeper.

May I venture to tell you a viſion of my delirium during my fever, which has continued to torment me ever ſince my recovery? Yes, learn and pity the diſtraction of your unhappy friend, that you may thank heaven for preſerving your heart from the horrid paſſion by which it is occaſioned. During the moſt violent moment of my phrenzy, when my fever was at the height, I thought I beheld the unhappy youth kneeling by my bed-ſide: not ſuch as when he charmed my ſenſes during the ſhort period of my felicity; but pale, wild, and loſt in deſpair. He took my hand, not diſguſted with its appearance, and, fearleſs of the ſad infection, eagerly kiſſed and bathed it with tears. I felt at the ſight of him that pleaſing emotion which his unexpected appearance uſed formerly to occaſion. I endeavoured to dart towards him, but was reſtrained. You tore him from me, and what affected me moſt were his ſighs and groans, which ſeemed to increaſe as he went farther from me.

It is impoſſible to deſcribe the effect of this ſtrange dream. My fever was long and violent; I continued many days inſenſible; I have ſeen him often in my phrenzy; but none of my dreams have left half the impreſſion on my memory which this laſt did: it is impoſſible to drive it from my imagination. Methinks I ſee him every moment in that attitude. His air, his dreſs, his manner, his ſorrowful and tender look, are continually

tinually before my eyes. His lips ſeem ſtill to preſs my hand; I feel it wet with his tears. His plaintive voice melts my heart; now I behold him dragged far from me, whilſt I endeavour in vain to hold him faſt. In ſhort, the whole imaginary ſcene appears in my mind as real as if it had actually paſſed.

I deliberated long before I could reſolve to tell you this. Shame kept me ſilent when we were together: but the idea grows every day ſtronger, and torments me to ſuch a degree, that I can no longer conceal my folly. Would that I were entirely a fool! why ſhould I wiſh to preſerve that reaſon which ſerves only to make me wretched?

But to return to my dream. Rally me, my dear friend, if you will, for my ſimplicity; but ſurely there is ſomething myſterious in this viſion, which diſtinguiſhes it from common phrenzy. Can it be a preſage of his death? or is he already dead? and was it thus that heaven deigned for once to be my guide, and invite me to follow him whom I was ordained to love? Alas! a ſummons to the grave would be the greateſt bleſſing I could receive.

To what purpoſe do I recall theſe vain maxims of philoſophy, which amuſe only thoſe who have no feelings? They impoſe on me no longer, and I cannot help deſpiſing them. I believe that ſpirits are inviſible; but is it impoſſible that, between two lovers ſo cloſely united, there ſhould be an immediate communication, inde-

pendent of the body and the ſenſes? May not their mutual impreſſions be tranſmitted through the brain?——Poor Eloiſa! what extravagant ideas! How credulous are we rendered by our paſſions! and how difficult it is for a heart ſeverely affected to relinquiſh its errours, even after conviction!

LETTER CVII.

THE ANSWER.

UNFORTUNATE and tender girl! are you then deſtined to be unhappy? I try in vain to keep you from ſorrow, but you ſeem to court affliction: your evil genius is more powerful than all my endeavours. Do not, however, add chimerical apprehenſions to ſo many real cauſes of inquietude; and ſince my caution has been more prejudicial than ſerviceable to you, let me free you from a miſtake which aggravates your miſery; perhaps the melancholy truth will be leſs tormenting. Know then that your dream was not a dream; that it was not the phantom of your friend which you beheld, but his real perſon, and that the affecting ſcene, which is ever preſent to your imagination, did actually paſs in your room on the day after your diſorder was at the criſis.

On the preceding day I left you very late; and Mr. Orbe, who would take me from you that night, was ready to depart; when on a ſudden

den we perceived that unhappy wretch, whoſe condition is truely deplorable, enter haſtily, and throw himſelf at our feet. He took poſt horſes immediately on the receipt of your laſt letter. By travelling day and night he performed the journey in three days, and never ſtopped till the laſt ſtage; where he waited in order to enter the town under favour of the night. I am aſhamed to confeſs, that I was leſs eager than Mr. Orbe to embrace him: for without knowing the intent of his journey, I foreſaw the conſequence. The bitter recollection of former times, your danger and his, his manifeſt diſcompoſure of mind, all contributed to check ſo agreeable a ſurpriſe; and I was too powerfully affected to ſalute him with eagerneſs. I nevertheleſs embraced him with a heart-felt emotion, in which he ſympathiſed, and which reciprocally diſplayed itſelf in a kind of ſilent grief, more eloquent than tears and lamentations. The firſt words he uttered were—— "How does ſhe? Oh! how is my Eloiſa? am I to live or die?" I concluded from thence, that he was informed of your illneſs, and upon the ſuppoſition that he was likewiſe acquainted with the nature of it, I ſpoke without any other precaution than that of extenuating the danger. When he underſtood that it was the ſmall-pox, he made dreadful lamentations, and was taken ſuddenly ill. Fatigue and the want of ſleep, together with perturbation of mind, had ſo entirely overcome him, that it was ſome time before we could bring him to himſelf. He had ſcarce ſtrength

ſtrength to ſpeak; we therefore perſuaded him to go to reſt.

Nature being quite ſpent, he ſlept twelve hours ſucceſſively, but with ſo much agitation, that ſuch a ſleep muſt rather impair than recruit his ſtrength. The next day gave birth to new perplexity: he was abſolutely determined to ſee you. I repreſented to him the danger there was that his preſence might occaſion ſome fatal revolution in your diſtemper. He propoſed to wait till there was no riſque; but his ſtay itſelf was a terrible riſque, of which I endeavoured to make him ſenſible. He rudely interrupted me. "Ceaſe (ſaid he, with a tone of indignation) your cruel eloquence: it is too much to exert it for my ruin. Do not hope to drive me from hence, as you did when I was forced into exile. I would travel a hundred times from the fartheſt extremity of the world for one glance of my Eloiſa; but I ſwear (added he with vehemence) by the Authour of my being, that I will not ſtir till I have ſeen her. We will try for once, whether I ſhall move you with compaſſion, or you make me guilty of perjury."

His reſolution was fixed. Mr. Orbe was of opinion that we ſhould contrive ſome means to gratify him, that we might ſend him away before his return was diſcovered: for he was only known to one perſon in the houſe, of whoſe ſecrecy I was aſſured; and we called him by a feigned name before the family*. I promiſed him,

* We find in the fourth part, that this feigned name was St. Preux.

him that he ſhould ſee you the next night, upon condition that he ſtaid but a minute, that he did not utter a ſyllable, and that he departed the next morning before break of day. To theſe conditions I exacted his ſolemn promiſe; then I was eaſy, I left my huſband with him, and returned to you.

I found you much better; the eruption was quite complete; and the phyſician raiſed my courage, by giving me hopes. I laid my plan beforehand with Bab, and the increaſe of your fever, though a little abated, leaving you ſtill ſomewhat light-headed, I took that opportunity to diſmiſs every body, and ſend my huſband word to introduce his gueſt, concluding that before the paroxyſm of your diſorder was over, you would be leſs likely to recollect him. We had all the difficulty in the world to get rid of your diſconſolate father, who was determined to ſit up with you every night. At length I told him with ſome warmth, that he would ſpare nobody the trouble of watching, for that I was determined likewiſe to ſit up with you, and that he might be aſſured, though he was your father, his tenderneſs for you was not greater than mine. He departed with reluctance, and we remained by ourſelves. Mr. Orbe came about eleven, and told me that he had left your friend in the ſtreet. I went in ſearch of him: I took him by the hand: he trembled like a leaf. As he went through the ante-chamber, his ſtrength

failed him: he drew his breath with difficulty, and was forced to ſit down.

At length having ſingled out ſome objects by the faint glimmering of a diſtant light——"Yes (ſaid he, with a deep ſigh) I recollect theſe apartments. Once in my life I traverſed them——about the ſame hour——with the ſame myſterious caution——I trembled as I do now——My heart fluttered with the ſame emotion——O! raſh creature that I was——though but a poor mortal, I nevertheleſs dared to taſte.——What am I now going to behold in that ſame ſpot, where every thing diffuſed a delight with which my ſoul was intoxicated? what am I going to view, in that ſame object which inſpired and ſhared my tranſports?——The retinue of melancholy, the image of death, afflicted virtue, and expiring beauty!"

Dear couſin, I will ſpare your tender heart the diſmal detail of ſuch an affecting ſcene. He ſaw you, and was mute. He had promiſed to be ſilent——but ſuch a ſilence! He fell upon his knees; he ſobbed, and kiſſed the curtains of your bed; he lifted up his hands and eyes; he fetched deep and ſilent groans; he could ſcarce ſtifle his grief and lamentations. Without ſeeing him, you accidentally put one of your hands out of bed; he ſeiſed it with extravagant eagerneſs; the ardent kiſſes he impreſſed on your ſick hand awaked you ſooner than all the noiſe and murmur which buzzed about you. I perceived that you recollected him, and in ſpite of all his reſiſtance

ance and complaints, I forced him from your chamber directly, hoping to elude the impreſſion of ſuch a fleeting apparition, under the pretence of its being the effect of your delirium. But finding that you took no notice of it, I concluded that you had forgot it. I forbad Bab to mention it, and I am perſuaded ſhe has kept her word. A needleſs caution which love has diſconcerted, and which has only ſerved to aggravate the pain of a recollection which it is too late to efface.

He departed as he had promiſed, and I made him ſwear not to ſtop in the neighbourhood. But, my dear girl, this is not all; I muſt acquaint you with another circumſtance, of which likewiſe you cannot long remain ignorant. Lord B—— paſſed by two days afterwards; he haſtened to overtake him; he joined him at Dijon, and found him ill. The unlucky wretch had caught the ſmall-pox. He kept it ſecret from me that he had never had the diſtemper, and I introduced him without precaution. As he could not cure your diſorder, he was determined to partake of it. When I recollect the eagerneſs with which he kiſſed your hand, I make no doubt but he underwent inoculation purpoſely. It is impoſſible to have been worſe prepared to receive it; but it was the inoculation of love, and it proved fortunate. The authour of life preſerved the moſt tender lover that ever exiſted; he is recovered, and according to my lord's laſt

letter, they are actually by this time ſet out for Paris.

You ſee, my too lovely couſin, that you ought to baniſh thoſe melancholy terrours which alarm you without reaſon. You have long ſince renounced the perſon of your friend, and you find that his life is ſafe. Think of nothing, therefore, but how to preſerve your own, and how to make the promiſed ſacrifice to paternal affection with becoming grace. Ceaſe to be the ſport of vain hope, and to feed yourſelf with chimeras. You are in great haſte to be proud of your deformity; let me adviſe you to be more humble; believe me, you have yet too much reaſon to be ſo. You have undergone a cruel infection, but it has ſpared your face. What you take for ſeams, is nothing but a redneſs which will quickly diſappear. I was worſe affected than you, yet, nevertheleſs, you ſee I am tolerable. My angel, you will ſtill be beautiful in ſpite of yourſelf; and do you think that the enamoured Wolmar, who in three years abſence could not conquer a paſſion conceived in eight days, is likely to be cured of it, when he has an opportunity of ſeeing you every hour? Oh! if your only reſource is the hope of being diſagreeable, how deſperate is your condition!

LETTER

LETTER CVIII.

FROM ELOISA.

IT is too much! It is too much! O my friend! the victory is your's. I am not proof againſt ſuch powerful love; my reſolution is exhauſted. My conſcience affords me the conſolatory teſtimony, that I have exerted my utmoſt efforts. Heaven, I hope, will not call me to account for more than it has beſtowed upon me. This ſorrowful heart, which coſt you ſo dear, and which you have more than purchaſed, is your's without reſerve; it was attached to you the firſt moment my eyes beheld you; and it will remain your's to my dying breath. You have too much deſerved it ever to be in danger of loſing it; and I am weary of being the ſlave of a chimerical virtue at the expenſe of juſtice.

Yes, my moſt tender and generous lover, your Eloiſa will be ever your's, will love you ever; I muſt, I will, I ought. To you I reſign the empire which love has given you; a dominion of which nothing ſhall ever deprive you more. The deceitful voice which murmurs at the bottom of my ſoul, whiſpers in vain: it ſhall no longer betray me. What are the vain duties it preſcribes, in oppoſition to a paſſion which heaven itſelf inſpired? Is not the obligation which binds me to you the moſt ſolemn of all? Is it not to you alone that I have given an abſo-

lute promiſe? Was not the firſt vow of my heart never to forget you? and is not your inviolable attachment a freſh tie to ſecure my conſtancy? In the tranſports of love with which I once more ſurrender my heart to thee, my only regret is, that I have ſtruggled againſt ſentiments ſo agreeable and ſo natural. Nature, O gentle nature, reſume thy rights! I abjure the ſavage virtues which conſpire to thy deſtruction. Can the inclinations which thou haſt inſpired be more ſeductive than a ſpecious reaſon which has ſo often miſled me?

O my dear friend, have ſome regard for the tenderneſs of my inclinations; you are too much indebted to them to abhor them; but allow of a participation which nature and affection demands; let not the rights of blood and friendſhip be totally extinguiſhed by thoſe of love. Do not imagine that to follow you I will ever quit my father's houſe. Do not hope that I will refuſe to comply with the obligations impoſed on me by parental authority. The cruel loſs of one of the authors of my being has taught me to be cautious how I afflict the other. No, ſhe whom he expects to be his only comfort hereafter will not increaſe the affliction of his ſoul, already oppreſſed with diſquietude: I will not deſtroy all that gave me life. No, no, I am ſenſible of my crime, but cannot abhor it. Duty, honour, virtue, all theſe conſiderations have loſt their influence, but yet I am not a monſter; I am frail, but not unnatural. I am determined

determined I will not grieve any of the objects of my affection. Let a father, tenacious of his word, and jealous of a vain prerogative, diſpoſe of my hand according to his promiſe; but let love alone diſpoſe of my heart; let my tears inceſſantly trickle down the boſom of my tendereſt friend. Let me be loſt and wretched, but, if poſſible, let every one dear to me be happy and contented. On you three my exiſtence depends, and may your felicity make me forget my miſery and deſpair.

LETTER CIX.

THE ANSWER.

WE revive my Eloiſa; all the real ſentiments of our ſouls reſume their wonted courſe. Nature has preſerved our exiſtence, and love has reſtored us to life. Did you ſuppoſe, could you be raſh enough to imagine, you could withdraw your affections from me? I am better acquainted with your heart than yourſelf: that heart which heaven deſtined to be mine! I find we are united by one common thread, which death alone can divide. Is it in our power to ſeparate them, or ought we even to attempt it? are they joined together by ties which man hath formed, and which man can diſſolve? No, no, my Eloiſa! if cruel deſtiny bars our claim to tender conjugal titles, yet nothing can deprive us of the character of faith-

ful lovers; that ſhall be the comfort of our melancholy days, and we will carry it with us to the grave.

Thus, we recover life only to renew our ſufferings, and the conſcioufneſs of our exiſtence is nothing more than a ſenſe of affliction. Unfortunate beings! how are we altered! how have we ceaſed to be what we were formerly! Where is that enchantment of ſupreme felicity? where are thoſe exquiſite raptures which enlivened our paſſion? Nothing is left of us but our love; love alone remains, and all its charms are eclipſed. O thou dear and too dutiful girl, thou fond fair one without reſolution! all our misfortunes are derived from thy errours. Alas! a heart of leſs purity would not have ſo fatally miſled thee! yes, the honour of thy heart has been our ruin; the uprights ſentiments which fill thy breaſt have baniſhed diſcretion. You would endeavour to reconcile filial tenderneſs with unconquerable love; by attempting to gratify all your inclinations, you confound inſtead of conciliating them, and your very virtue renders you guilty. O Eloiſa, how incredible is your power! by what ſtrange magick do you faſcinate my reaſon! Even while you endeavour to make me bluſh at our paſſion, you have the art to appear amiable in your very failings. You force me to admire you, even while I partake of your remorſe ——— your remorſe! ——— does it become you to feel remorſe? ——— you whom I loved —— you, whom I ſhall never ceaſe to adore

adore——Can guilt ever approach your ſpotleſs heart?——O cruel Eloiſa! if you mean to reſtore the heart which belongs to me alone, return it to me ſuch as it was, when you firſt beſtowed it.

What do you tell me?——will you venture to intimate———you fall into the arms of another?———ſhall another poſſeſs you?——— will you be no longer mine?———or, to complete my horrour, will you not be ſolely mine? —I—ſhall I ſuffer ſuch dreadful puniſhment? ——ſhall I ſee you ſurvive yourſelf?———No, I had rather loſe you entirely, than ſhare you with another.——Why has not heaven armed me with courage equal to the rage which diſtracts me?———Sooner than *thy* hand ſhould debaſe itſelf by a fatal union which love abhors, and honour condemns, I would interpoſe my own, and plunge a poignard in thy breaſt. I would drain thy chaſte heart of blood which infidelity never tainted; with that ſpotleſs blood I would mix my own, which burns in my veins with inextinguiſhable ardour; I would fall in thy arms; I would yield my laſt breath on thy lips——I would receive thine———How! Eloiſa expiring! thoſe lovely eyes cloſed by the horrours of death!——that breaſt, the throne of love, mangled by my hand, and pouring forth copious ſtreams of blood and life!—— No, live and ſuffer, endure the puniſhment of my cowardice. No, I wiſh thou wert no more, but my paſſion is not ſo violent as to ſtab thee.

Oh! that you did but know the ſtate of my heart, which is ready to burſt with anguiſh! Never did it burn with ſo pure a flame—Never were your innocence and virtue ſo dear to me. I am a lover, I know how to prize an amiable object; I am ſenſible that I do: but I am no more than man, and it is not in human power to renounce ſupreme felicity. One night, one ſingle night has made a thorough change in my ſoul. Preſerve me, if thou canſt, from that dangerous recollection, and I am virtuous ſtill. But the rememberance of that fatal night is ſunk to the bottom of my ſoul, and will darken all the reſt of my days. O Eloiſa, thou moſt adorable object! if we muſt be wretched for ever, yet let us enjoy one hour of tranſport, and then reſign ourſelves to eternal lamentations.

Liſten to the man who loves you. Why ſhould we alone affect to be wiſer than the reſt of mankind, and purſue, with puerile ſimplicity, thoſe chimerical virtues which all the world talk of, and no one practices?—What! ſhall we pretend to be greater moraliſts than the crowd of philoſophers which people London and Paris, who all laugh at conjugal fidelity, and treat adultery as a jeſt? Inſtances of this nature are far from being ſcandalous; we are not at liberty even to cenſure them, and people of ſpirit would laugh at a man who ſhould ſtifle the affections of his heart out of reſpect to matrimony. In fact, ſay they, an injury which only conſiſts in opinion is no injury while

while it remains ſecret. What injury does a huſband receive from an infidelity to which he is a ſtranger? by how many obliging condeſcenſions does a woman compenſate for her failings*? What endearments ſhe employs to prevent, and to remove his ſuſpicions? Deprived of an imaginary good, he actually enjoys more real felicity; and this ſuppoſed crime, which makes ſuch a noiſe, is but an additional tie, which ſecures the peace of ſociety.

O God forbid, thou dear partner of my ſoul, that I ſhould wiſh to preſerve thy affections by ſuch ſhameful maxims! I abhor them, though I am not able to confute them, and my conſcience is a better advocate than my reaſon. Not that I pride myſelf upon a ſpirit which I deteſt, or that I am fond of a virtue bought ſo dear: but I think it leſs criminal to reproach myſelf with my failings than to attempt to vindicate them, and I conſider an endeavour to ſtifle remorſe as the ſtrongeſt degree of guilt.

I know not what I write. I find my mind in a horrid ſtate, much worſe than it was, even before I received your letter. The hope you tender me is gloomy and melancholy; it

* Where did the honeſt Swiſs learn this? Women of gaiety have long ſince aſſumed more imperious airs. They begin by boldly introducing their lovers into the houſe, and if they permit their huſbands to continue there, it is only while they behave towards them with a proper reſpect. A woman who ſhould take pains to conceal a criminal intrigue would ſhow that ſhe was aſhamed, and would be deſpiſed; not one female of ſpirit would take notice of her.

totally extinguiſhes that pure light which has ſo often been our guide: your charms are blaſted, and yet appear more affecting: I perceive that you are affectionate and unhappy: my heart is overwhelmed with the tears which flow from your eyes, and I vent bitter reproaches on myſelf, for having preſumed to taſte a happineſs which I can no longer enjoy but at the hazard of your peace.

Nevertheleſs, I perceive that a ſecret ardour fires my ſoul, and revives that courage which my remorſe has ſubdued. Ah! lovely Eloiſa! do you know how many loſſes a love like mine can compenſate? Do you know how far a lover, who only breathes for you, can make your life agreeable? are you ſenſible that it is for you alone I wiſh to live, to move, to think? No, thou delicious ſource of my exiſtence, I will have no ſoul but thine, I will no longer be any thing but a part of thy lovely ſelf, and you will meet with ſuch a kind reception in the inmoſt receſſes of my heart, that you will never perceive any decay in your charms. Well, we ſhall be guilty, yet we will not be wicked; we ſhall be guilty, yet we will be in love with virtue: ſo far from attempting to palliate our failings, we will deplore them; we will lament together; if poſſible, we will work our redemption by being good and benevolent. Eloiſa! O Eloiſa, what will you? what can you do? thou canſt never diſengage thyſelf from my heart: is it not eſpouſed to thine?

I have

I have long ſince bid adieu to thoſe vain proſpects of fortune which ſo palpably deluded me. I now ſolely confine my attention to the duties I owe Lord B——; he will force me with him to England; he imagines I can be of ſervice to him there. Well, I will attend him. But I will ſteal away once every year; I will come in ſecret to viſit you. If I cannot ſpeak to you, at leaſt I ſhall have the pleaſure of gazing on you; I may at leaſt kiſs your foot-ſteps; one glance from your eyes will ſupport me ten months. When I am forced to return, and retire from her I love, it will be ſome conſolation to me to count the ſteps which will bring me back again. Theſe frequent journies will be ſome amuſement to your unhappy lover: when he ſets out to viſit you, he will anticipate the pleaſure of beholding you; the rememberance of the tranſports he has felt will enchant his imagination during his abſence; in ſpite of his cruel deſtiny, his melancholy time will not be utterly loſt; every year will be marked with ſome tincture of pleaſure, and the ſhort-lived moments he paſſes near you will be multiplied during his whole life.

LETTER CX.

FROM MRS. ORBE.

YOUR miſtreſs is no more; but I have recovered my friend, and you too have gained one, whoſe affection will more than recom-

penſe

penſe your loſs. Eloiſa is married, and her merit is ſufficient to make the gentleman happy who has blended his intereſt with her's. After ſo many indiſcretions, you ought to thank heaven, which has preſerved you both, her from ignominy, and you from the regret of having diſhonoured her. Reverence her change of condition; do not write to her; ſhe deſires you will not. Wait till ſhe writes to you, which ſhe will ſhortly do. Now is the time to convince me that you merit that eſteem I ever entertained for you, and that your heart is ſuſceptible of a pure and diſintereſted friendſhip.

LETTER CXI.

FROM ELOISA.

I Have been ſo long accuſtomed to make you the confident of all the ſecrets of my ſoul, that it is not in my power to diſcontinue ſo agreeable a correſpondence. In the moſt important occurrences of life, I long to diſcloſe my heart to you. Open your's, my beloved friend, to receive what I communicate; treaſure up in your mind the long diſcourſe of friendſhip, which, though it ſometimes renders the ſpeaker too diffuſive, always makes the friendly hearer patient.

Attached to the fortune of a huſband, or rather to the will of a parent, by an indiſſoluble tie,

tie, I enter upon a new ſtate of life, which death alone can terminate: let us for a moment caſt our eyes on that I have quitted: the recollection of former times cannot be painful to us. Perhaps it will afford ſome leſſons, which will teach me how to make a proper uſe of the time to come: perhaps it will open ſome lights which may ſerve to explain thoſe particulars of my conduct, which always appeared myſterious in your eyes. At leaſt, by reflecting on the relation in which we lately ſtood to each other, our hearts will become more ſenſible of the reciprocal obligations from which death alone can releaſe us.

It is now near ſix years ſince I firſt ſaw you. You was young, genteel, and agreeable: I had ſeen others more comely, and more engaging; but no one ever excited in me the leaſt emotion, and my heart ſurrendered itſelf to you on the firſt interview*. I imagined that I ſaw in your countenance the traces of a ſoul which ſeemed the counterpart of mine. I thought that my ſenſes only ſerved as organs to more refined ſentiments; and I loved in you not ſo much what I ſaw, as what I imagined I felt within myſelf. It is not two months ſince, that I ſtill flattered myſelf I was not miſtaken: Blind Love (ſaid

* Mr. Richardſon makes a jeſt of theſe attachments formed at firſt ſight, and founded on an unaccountable congeniality of nature. It is eaſy to laugh at theſe attachments; but as too many of this kind take place, inſtead of entertaining ourſelves with controverting them, would it not be better to teach us how to conquer them?

(ſaid I) was in the right; we were made for each other, if human events do not interrupt the affinity of nature; and if we are allowed to enjoy felicity in this life, we ſhall certainly be happy together.

Theſe ſentiments were reciprocal: I ſhould have been deceived had I entertained them alone. The love I felt could not ariſe but from a mutual conformity and harmony of ſouls. We never love unleſs we are beloved; at leaſt, our paſſion is ſhort lived. Thoſe affections which meet with no return, and which are ſuppoſed to make ſo many wretched, are only founded on ſenſuality: if ever they penetrate the heart, it is by means of ſome falſe reſemblance, and the miſtake is quickly diſcovered. Senſual love cannot ſubſiſt without fruition, and dies with it: the ſublimer paſſion cannot be ſatisfied without engaging the heart, and is as permanent as the analogy which gave it birth*. Such was our's from the beginning; and ſuch, I hope, it will ever be to the end of our days. I perceived, I felt that I was beloved, and that I merited your affection. My lips were ſilent, my looks were conſtrained; but my heart explained itſelf: we quickly experienced I know not what, which renders ſilence eloquent, which gives utterance to the downcaſt eye, which occaſions a kind of forward baſhfulneſs, which diſcovers the tumult of deſire through the veil of timidity.

* Admitting the analogy to be chimerical, yet it laſts as long as the illuſion, which makes us ſuppoſe it real.

timidity, and conveys ideas which it dares not expreſs.

I perceived the ſituation of my heart, and gave myſelf over for loſt the firſt word you ſpoke. I found what pain your reſerve coſt you. I approved of the diſtance you obſerved, and admired you the more; I endeavoured to recompenſe you for ſuch a neceſſary and painful ſilence, without prejudice to my innocence; I offered violence to my natural diſpoſition; I imitated my couſin; I became like her arch and lively, to avoid too ſerious explanations, and to indulge a thouſand tender careſſes, under cover of that affected ſprightlineſs. I took ſuch pains to make your ſituation agreeable, that the apprehenſions of a change increaſed your reſerve. This ſcheme turned to my diſadvantage: we generally ſuffer for aſſuming a borrowed character. Fool that I was! I accelerated my ruin, inſtead of preventing it: I employed poiſon as a palliative; and what ſhould have induced you to preſerve ſilence was the occaſion which tempted you to explain yourſelf. In vain did I attempt, by an affected indifference, to keep you at a diſtance in our private interviews; that very conſtraint betrayed me: you wrote. Inſtead of committing your firſt letter to the fire, or delivering it to my mother, I ventured to open it. That was my original crime, and all the reſt was a neceſſary conſequence of that firſt fault. I endeavoured to avoid anſwering thoſe fatal letters, which I could not forbear reading. This

violent ſtruggle affected my health. I ſaw the abyſs in which I was going to plunge. I looked upon myſelf with horrour, and could not reſolve to endure your abſence. I fell into a kind of deſpair; I had rather that you had ceaſed to live than not to live for me: I even went ſo far as to wiſh, and to deſire your death. Heaven knew my heart; theſe efforts may make amends for ſome failings.

Finding you diſpoſed to implicit obedience, I was determined to ſpeak. Chaillot had given me ſome inſtructions, which made me too ſenſible of the danger of avowing my paſſion. But love, which extorted the confeſſion, taught me to elude its conſequence. You was my laſt reſort; I had ſuch an entire confidence in you, that I furniſhed you with arms againſt my weakneſs: ſuch was my opinion of your integrity, that I truſted you would preſerve me from myſelf, and I did you no more than juſtice. When I found the reſpect you paid to ſo valuable a truſt, I perceived that my paſſion had not blinded me in my opinion of thoſe virtues with which I ſuppoſe you endowed. I reſigned myſelf with greater ſecurity, as I imagined that we ſhould both of us be contented with a ſentimental affection. As I diſcovered nothing at the bottom of my heart but ſentiments of honour, I taſted without reſerve the charms of ſuch a delightful intimacy. Alas! I did not perceive that my diſorder grew inveterate from inattention, and that habit was ſtill more dangerous than love.

Being

Being ſenſibly affected by your reſerve, I thought I might relax mine without any riſk; in the innocence of my deſires I hoped to lead you to the heights of virtue, by the tender careſſes of friendſhip. But the grove at Clarens ſoon convinced me that I truſted myſelf too far, and that we ought not to grant the leaſt indulgence to the ſenſes, where prudence forbids us to gratify them entirely. One moment, one ſingle moment, fired me with a deſire which nothing could extinguiſh; and if my will yet reſiſted, my heart was from that time corrupted.

You partook of my diſtraction; your letter made me tremble. The danger was double: to preſerve me from you and from myſelf, it was neceſſary to baniſh you. This was the laſt effort of expiring virtue; but by your flight, you made your conqueſt ſure; and when I ſaw you no more, the languor your abſence occaſioned deprived me of the little ſtrength I had left to reſiſt you.

When my father quitted the ſervice, he brought M. Wolmar home with him. His life, which he owed to him, and an intimacy of twenty years, rendered this friend ſo dear, that he could never part from him. M. Wolmar was advanced in years, and though of high birth had met with no woman who had fixed his affections. My father mentioned me to him, as to a man whom he wiſhed to call his ſon: he was deſirous to ſee me, and it was with this

intent

intent they came together. It was my fate to be agreeable to him, who never was ſuſceptible of any impreſſion before. They entered into ſecret engagements, and M. Wolmar, who had ſome affairs to ſettle in one of the northern courts, where his family and fortune were, deſired time, and took leave upon their mutual engagement. After his departure, my father acquainted my mother and me, that he deſigned him for my huſband; and commanded me, with a tone which cut off all reply from my timidity, to prepare myſelf to receive his hand. My mother, who too plainly perceived the inclinations of my heart, and who had a natural liking for you, made ſeveral attempts to ſhake my father's reſolution; ſhe durſt not abſolutely propoſe you, but ſhe ſpoke of you in ſuch terms as ſhe hoped might make my father eſteem you, and wiſh to be acquainted with you; but your rank in life made him inſenſible to all your accompliſhments; and though he allowed that high birth could not ſupply them, yet he maintained that birth alone could make them of any value.

The impoſſibility of being happy fanned the flame which it ought to have extinguiſhed. A flattering deluſion had ſupported me under all my troubles; when that was gone, I had no ſtrength to oppoſe them. While I had the leaſt hope of being your's, I might have triumphed over my inclinations; it would have coſt me leſs to have ſpent my whole life in reſiſtance, than to renounce

renounce you for ever; and the very idea of an everlaſting oppoſition deprived me of fortitude to ſubdue my paſſion.

Grief and love preyed upon my heart; I fell into a ſtate of dejection, which you might perceive in my letters; your's, which you wrote to me from Meillerie, completed my affliction: to the meaſure of my own troubles was added the ſenſe of your deſpair. Alas! the weakeſt mind is always deſtined to bear the troubles of both. The ſcheme you ventured to propoſe to me put the finiſhing ſtroke to my perplexity. Miſery ſeemed to be the infallible lot of my days; the inevitable choice which remained for me to make was to add to it either your infelicity or that of my parents. I could not endure the horrible alternative; the power of nature has its bounds; ſuch agitations overpowered my ſtrength. I wiſhed to be delivered from life. Heaven ſeemed to take pity of me; but cruel death ſpared me for my deſtruction. I ſaw you, I recovered, and was undone.

If my failings did not contribute to my felicity, I was not diſappointed: I never conſidered them as the means to procure happineſs. I perceived that my heart was formed for virtue, without which I could never be happy; I fell through weakneſs, not from errour; I had not even blindneſs to plead in excuſe for my frailty. I was bereaved of every hope; it was impoſſible for me to be otherwiſe than unfortunate. Innocence and love were equally requiſite to my peace:

peace: as I could not preſerve them both, an was witneſs to your diſtraction, I conſulted you intereſt alone in the choice I made; and to ſav you, ruined myſelf.

But it is not ſo eaſy as many imagine to for ſake virtue. She continues for ſome time t torment thoſe who abandon her; and her charms which are the delight of refined ſouls, conſtitut the chief puniſhment of the wicked, who ar condemned to be in love with her when they can no longer enjoy her. Guilty, yet not depraved, I could not eſcape the remorſe which purſued me; honour was dear to me, even after it was gone; though my ſhame was ſecret, it was not leſs grievous, and though the whole world had been witneſs to it, I could not have been more ſenſibly affected. I comforted myſelf under my affliction, like one who having a wound dreads a mortification; and who, by the ſenſe of pain, is encouraged not to deſpair of a cure.

Nevertheleſs, my ſhameful ſtate was inſupportable. By endeavouring to ſtifle the reproach of guilt, without renouncing the crime, I experienced what every honeſt mind feels when it goes aſtray, and is fond of its miſtake. A new deluſion lent its aid to aſſuage the bitterneſs of repentance; I flattered myſelf, that my frailty would afford me the means of repairing my indiſcretion, and ventured to form a deſign of forcing my father to unite our hands. I depended on the firſt pledge of our love to cloſe this

this delightful union. I prayed to heaven for offspring, as the pledge of my return to virtue, and of our mutual happineſs: I wiſhed for it with as much earneſtneſs as another, in my place, would have dreaded it. The tenderneſs of love, by its ſoft illuſion, allayed the murmurs of my conſcience; the effects I hoped to derive from my frailty inſpired me with conſolation, and this pleaſing expectation was all the hope and comfort of my life.

Whenever I ſhould diſcover evident ſymptoms of my pregnancy, I was determined to make a publick declaration of my condition to M. Perret*, in the preſence of the whole family. I am timorous, it is true; I was ſenſible how dear ſuch a declaration would coſt me; but honour itſelf inſpired me with courage, and I choſe rather to bear at once the confuſion I deſerved, than to nouriſh everlaſting infamy at the bottom of my ſoul. I knew that my father would either doom me to death, or give me to my lover; this alternative had nothing in it terrible to my apprehenſion, and whatever might be the event, I concluded that this ſtep would put an end to all my ſufferings.

This, my dear friend, was the myſtery which I concealed from you, and which you endeavoured to penetrate which ſuch ſollicitous curioſity. A thouſand reaſons conſpired to make me uſe this reſerve with a man of your impetuoſity, not to mention that it would have been imprudent

* Miniſter of the pariſh.

imprudent to have furniſhed you with a new pr tence for preſſing your indiſcreet and importu nate application. It was above all things requ ſite to remove you during ſuch a perilous ſitu ation, and I was very ſenſible that you woul never have conſented to leave me in ſuch an ex tremity, had you known my danger.

Alas! I was once more deceived by ſuch flattering expectation. Heaven refuſed to fa vour deſigns which were conceived in wicked neſs. I did not deſerve the honour of being mother; my ſcheme was abortive, and I wa even deprived of an opportunity of expiating m frailty, at the expenſe of my reputation. Diſap pointed in my hope, the indiſcreet aſſignation which expoſed your life to danger, was a raſh neſs which my fond love coloured with thi gentle palliation: I imputed the ill ſucceſs of m wiſhes to myſelf; and my heart, miſled by itsde ſires, flattered itſelf that its eagerneſs to gratif them aroſe entirely from my anxiety to rende them lawful hereafter.

At one time I thought my wiſhes accom pliſhed: that miſtake was the ſource of my mo bitter affliction, and after nature had grante the petition of love, the ſtroke of deſtiny cam with aggravated cruelty. You know the ac cident which deſtroyed my laſt hopes, togethe with the fruit of my love. That misfortun happened during our ſeparation, as if heaven a that time intended to oppreſs me with all th evils I merited, and to ſeparate me at once fron

ever

every connexion which might contribute to our union.

Your departure put an end to my deluſion and to my pleaſures; I diſcovered, but too late, the chimeras which had impoſed upon me. I perceived that I had fallen into a ſtate truely deſpicable, and felt myſelf completely wretched; which was the inevitable conſequence of love without innocence, and hopeleſs deſires which I could never extinguiſh. Tortured by a thouſand fruitleſs griefs, I ſtifled reflexions which were as painful as unprofitable; I no longer looked upon myſelf as worthy of conſideration, and devoted my life to ſolitude for you: I had no honour, but your's; no hope, but in your happineſs, and the ſentiments which you communicated were alone capable of affecting me.

Love did not make me blind to your faults, but it made thoſe faults dear to me; and its deluſion was ſo powerful, that had you been more perfect, I ſhould have loved you leſs. I was no ſtranger to your heart, or your impetuoſity of temper. I was ſenſible, that with more courage than I, you had leſs patience, and that the afflictions which oppreſſed my ſoul would drive your's to deſpair. It was for this reaſon I always carefully kept my father's promiſe a ſecret from you; and at our parting, taking advantage of Lord B——'s zeal for your intereſt, and with a view to make you more attentive to your own welfare, flattered you with a hope which I myſelf did not entertain. Yet more;

apprized of the danger which threatened us, I took the only precaution for our mutual ſecurity, and by a ſolemn engagement having made you, as much as poſſible, maſter of my will, I hoped to inſpire you with confidence, and myſelf with fortitude, by means of a promiſe which I never durſt violate, and which might enſure your peace of mind. I own it was a needleſs obligation, and yet I ſhould never have infringed it. Virtue is ſo eſſential to our ſouls, that when we have once abandoned that which is real, we preſently faſhion another after the ſame model, and keep the more ſtrongly attached to this ſubſtitute, becauſe, perhaps, it is of our own election.

I need not tell you what perturbation I felt after your departure. The worſt of my apprehenſions was the dread of being forſaken. The place of your reſidence made me tremble. Your manner of living increaſed my terrour; I imagined that I already ſaw you debaſed into a man of intrigue. An ignominy of this nature touched me more ſenſibly than all my afflictions; I had rather have ſeen you wretched than contemptible; after ſo many troubles to which I had been inured, your diſhonour was the only one I could not ſupport.

My apprehenſions, which the ſtile of your letters confirmed, were quickly removed; and that by ſuch means as would have made any other completely uneaſy. I allude to the diſorderly courſe of life into which you was ſeduced,

duced, and of which your ready and frank confeſſion was, of all the proofs of your ſincerity, that which affected me moſt ſenſibly. I knew you too well to be ignorant what ſuch a confeſſion muſt have coſt you, even if I had been no longer dear to you. I perceived that love alone had triumphed over ſhame, and extorted it from you. I concluded that a heart ſo ſincere was incapable of diſguiſed infidelity; I diſcovered leſs guilt in your failing, than merit in the confeſſion; and calling to mind your former engagements, was entirely cured of jealouſy.

And yet, my worthy friend, my cure did not increaſe my felicity; for one torment leſs, a thouſand others roſe up inceſſantly, and I was never more ſenſible of the folly of ſeeking that repoſe in an unſettled mind which nothing but prudence can beſtow. I had, for a long time, ſecretly lamented the beſt of mothers, who inſenſibly waſted by a fatal decay. Bab, whom the unhappy conſequence of my miſconduct obliged to make my confidante, betrayed me, and diſcovered our mutual love, and my frailty, to my mother. I had juſt received your letters from my couſin, when they were ſeiſed. The proofs were too convincing; grief deprived her of the little ſtrength her illneſs had left her. I thought I ſhould have expired at her feet with remorſe. So far from conſigning me to the death I merited, ſhe concealed my ſhame, and was contented to bemoan my fall.

Even you, who had ſo ungratefully abuſed her kindneſs, was not odious to her. I was witneſs to the effect which your letter produced on her tender and affectionate mind. Alas! ſhe wiſhed for your happineſs and mine. She attempted more than once—but why ſhould I recall a hope which is now for ever extinguiſhed? heaven decreed it otherwiſe. She cloſed her melancholy days with the afflicting conſideration of being unable to move a rigid huſband, and of leaving a daughter behind her ſo little worthy of ſuch a parent.

Oppreſſed with ſuch a cruel loſs, my ſoul had no other ſtrength than what it received from that impreſſion; the voice of nature uttered groans which ſtifled the murmurs of love. I regarded the authour of my troubles with a kind of horrour. I endeavoured to ſtifle the deteſtable paſſion which had brought them upon me, and to renounce you for ever. This, no doubt, was what I ought to have done: had I not ſufficient cauſe of lamentation the remainder of my days, without being in continual queſt of new ſubjects of affliction? Every thing ſeemed to favour my reſolution. If melancholy ſoftens the mind, deep affliction hardens it. The remembrance of my dying mother effaced your image; we were diſtant from each other; hope had entirely abandoned me; my incomparable friend was never more great or more deſerving wholly to engroſs my heart. Her virtue, her diſcretion, her friendſhip, her tender careſſes,

ſeemed

ſeemed to have purified it: I thought I had forgotten you, and imagined myſelf cured. But it was too late; what I took for the indifference of extinguiſhed love was nothing but the heavineſs of deſpair.

As a ſick man, who falls into a weak ſtate when free from pain, is ſuddenly revived by more acute ſenſations, ſo I quickly perceived all my troubles renewed when my father acquainted me with M. Wolmar's approaching return. Invincible love then gave me incredible ſtrength. For the firſt time, I ventured to oppoſe my father to his face. I frankly proteſted that I could never like M. Wolmar; that I was determined to die ſingle; that he was maſter of my life, but not of my affections, and that nothing could ever make me alter my reſolution. I need not deſcribe the rage he was in, nor the treatment I was obliged to endure. I was immoveable: my timidity once vanquiſhed carried me to the other extreme, and if my tone was leſs imperious than my father's, it was nevertheleſs equally reſolute.

He found that I was determined, and that he ſhould make no impreſſion on me by dint of authority. For a minute I thought myſelf freed from his perſecution. But what became of me, when on a ſudden I ſaw the moſt rigid father ſoftened into tears, and proſtrate at my fate! Without ſuffering me to riſe, he embraced my knees, and fixing his ſtreaming eyes on mine, he addreſſed himſelf to me in a plaintive voice,

which ſtill murmurs in my ears. "O my child! have ſome reſpect for the grey hairs of your unhappy father; do not ſend me with ſorrow to the grave, after her who bore thee. Will Eloiſa be the death of all her family?"

Imagine my grief and aſtoniſhment. That attitude, that tone, that geſture, thoſe words, that horrible idea, overpowered me to that degree, that I dropped half dead into his arms, and it was not till after repeated ſobs, which for ſome time ſtifled utterance, that I was able to anſwer him in a faint and faltering voice: "O my father, I was armed againſt your menaces, but I am not proof againſt your tears. You will be the death of your daughter."

We were both of us in ſuch violent agitation that it was a long while before we recovered. In the mean time, recollecting his laſt words, I concluded that he was better informed of the particulars of my conduct than I had imagined, and being reſolved to turn thoſe circumſtances of information againſt him, I was preparing, at the hazard of my life, to make a confeſſion which I had too long deferred, when he haſtily interrupted me, and, as if he had foreſeen and dreaded what I was going to declare, ſpoke to me in the following terms:

"I know you have encouraged inclinations "unworthy a girl of your birth. It is time to "ſacrifice to duty and honour a ſhameful paſſion, "which you ſhall never gratify but at the ex-"penſe of my life. Attend to what your fa-

"ther's

"ther's honour, and your own, require of you,
"and then determine for yourſelf.

"M. Wolmar is of noble extraction, one
"who is diſtinguiſhed by all the accompliſhments
"requiſite to maintain his dignity; one who
"enjoys the publick eſteem, and who deſerves it.
"I am indebted to him for my life; and you
"are no ſtranger to the engagement I have con-
"cluded with him. You are further to under-
"ſtand, than on his return home to ſettle his con-
"cerns, he found himſelf involved by an unfor-
"tunate turn of affairs: he had loſt the greateſt
"part of his eſtate, and it was by ſingular good
"luck that he himſelf eſcaped from exile to Si-
"beria: he is coming back with the melancholy
"wreck of his fortune, upon the ſtrength of his
"friend's word, which never yet was forfeited.
"Tell me, now, in what manner I ſhall receive
"him on his return. Shall I ſay to him, Sir, I
"promiſed you my daughter while you were in
"affluent circumſtances, but now your fortune
"is ruined I muſt retract my word, for my
"daughter will never be your's? If I do not ex-
"preſs my refuſal in theſe words, it will be in-
"terpreted in this manner. To alledge your pre-
"engagement will be conſidered as a pretence,
"or it will be imputed as an additional diſgrace
"to me, and we ſhall paſs, you for an abandoned
"girl, and I for a diſhoneſt man, who has ſacri-
"ficed his word and honour to ſordid intereſt,
"and has added ingratitude to infidelity. My dear
"child, I have lived too long now to cloſe

" an unblemiſhed life with infamy, and ſixty
" years ſpent with honour are not to be pro-
" ſtituted in a quarter of an hour.

" You perceive, therefore (continued he)
" how unreaſonable is every objection which
" you can offer. Judge whether the giddy paſ-
" ſion of youth, whether attachments which
" modeſty diſavows, are to be put in compe-
" tition with the duty of a child, and the honour
" by which a parent ſtands bound. If the diſ-
" pute were, which of us two ſhould fall a vic-
" tim to the happineſs of the other, my tender-
" neſs would challenge the right of making that
" ſacrifice to affection; but honour, my child,
" calls upon me, and that always determines the
" reſolution of him whoſe blood you inherit."

I was not without a pertinent anſwer to theſe remonſtrances; but my father's prejudices confirmed him in his principles, ſo different from mine, that reaſons, which appeared to me unanſwerable, would not have had the leaſt weight with him. Beſides, not knowing whence he had gathered the intelligence he ſeemed to have gained with reſpect to my conduct, or how far his information extended; apprehending likewiſe by his eagerneſs to interrupt me, that he had formed his reſolution with regard to the matter I was going to communicate; and above all, being reſtrained by a ſenſe of ſhame which I could never ſubdue, I rather choſe to avail myſelf of an excuſe, which I thought would have

greater

greater weight, as it ſquared more with my father's peculiarity of thinking. I, therefore, made a frank declaration of the engagement I had made with you: I proteſted that I would never be falſe to my word, and that, whatever was the conſequence, I would never marry without your conſent.

In truth, I was delighted to find that my ſcruples did not offend him; he reproached me ſeverely for entering into ſuch an engagement, but he made no objection to its validity. So exalted are the ideas which a gentleman of honour naturally entertains with regard to the faith of engagements, and ſo ſacred a thing does he eſteem a promiſe! Inſtead of attempting, therefore, to diſpute the force of my obligation to you, he made me write a note, which he encloſed in a letter, and ſent away directly*. With what agitation did I expect your anſwer! How often did I wiſh that you might ſhow leſs delicacy than you ought! but I knew you too well, however, to doubt your compliance, and was ſenſible that the more painful you felt the ſacrifice required of you, the readier you would be to undergo it.

Your anſwer came; it was kept a ſecret from me during my illneſs; after my recovery, my fears were confirmed, and I was cut off from all further excuſes. At leaſt, my father declared he would admit of no more; and the dreadful expreſſion he had made uſe of gave him ſuch an aſcendancy over my will, that he made me ſwear

* See page 182 of the preſent volume.

never to ſay any thing to M. Wolmar which might make him averſe from marrying me; for, he added, that will appear to him like a trick concerted between us, and at all events the marriage muſt be concluded.

You know, my dear friend, that my conſtitution, which is ſtrong enough to endure fatigue and inclemency of weather, is not able to reſiſt the violence of paſſion, and that too exquiſite a ſenſibility is the ſource of all the evils which have afflicted my mind and body. Whether continued grief had tainted my blood, or whether nature took that opportunity to purify it from the fatal effects of fermentation, however it was, I found myſelf violently diſordered at the end of our converſation. When I left my father's room, I endeavoured to write a line to you, but found myſelf ſo ill, that I was obliged to go to bed, from whence I hoped never to riſe. You are too well acquainted with the reſt. My imprudence led you to indiſcretion. You came, I ſaw you, and thought that I had only beheld you in one of thoſe dreams, which during my delirium ſo often preſented your image before me. But when I found that you had really been there, that I had actually ſeen you, that being reſolved to partake of my diſtemper, which you could not cure, you had purpoſely caught the infection, I could no longer reſiſt this laſt proof; and finding that the tenderneſs of your affection ſurvived even hope itſelf, my love, which I had taken ſuch pains *to ſmother*, inſtantly broke through all reſtraint,

and

and revived with more ardour than ever. I perceived that I was doomed to love in ſpite of myſelf; I was ſenſible that I muſt be guilty; that I could neither reſiſt my father nor my love, and that I could never reconcile the rights of love and conſanguinity, but at the expenſe of honour. Thus, all my noble ſentiments were utterly extinguiſhed; all my faculties were altered; guilt was no longer horrible in my ſight; I felt a thorough change within me; at length, the unruly tranſports of a paſſion, rendered impetuous by oppoſition, threw me into the moſt diſmal dejection with which human nature was ever oppreſſed; I even dared to deſpair of virtue. Your letter, which was rather calculated to awaken remorſe than to ſtifle it, put the finiſhing ſtroke to my diſtraction. My heart was ſo far depraved, that my reaſon could not withſtand the arguments of your plauſible philoſophy. Such horrible ideas crowded into my mind, as it had never been tainted with before. My will ſtill oppoſed them but my imagination grew familiar with them, and if my ſoul did not harbour anticipated guilt, yet I was no longer miſtreſs of that noble reſolution which alone is capable of reſiſting temptation.

I am ſcarce able to proceed. Let me ſtop a while. Recall to your mind thoſe days of innocence and felicity, when the lively and tender paſſion with which we were mutually animated only ſerved to refine our ſentiments, when that

holy ardour contributed to render modeſty more lovely, and honour more amiable; when our very deſires ſeemed kindled, only that we might have the glory of ſubduing them, and of rendering ourſelves more worthy of each other. Look over our firſt letters; reflect on thoſe moments ſo fleeting and ſo little enjoyed, when love appeared to us arrayed in all the charms of virtue, and when we were too fond of each other to enter into any connexions which ſhe condemned.

What were we then, and what are we now? Two tender lovers ſpent a whole year together in painful ſilence; they ſcarce ventured to breathe a ſigh, but their hearts underſtood each other; they thought their ſufferings great, but, had they known it, they were happy. Their mutual ſilence was ſo intelligible, that at length they ventured to converſe; but, ſatisfied with the power of triumphing over their inclinations, and with giving each other the glorious proofs of their victory, they paſſed another year in a reſerve ſcarce leſs ſevere; they imparted their troubles to each other, and were happy. But theſe violent ſtruggles were too painful to be ſupported long; one moment's weakneſs led them aſtray; they forgot themſelves in their tranſports; but if they were no longer chaſte, they were ſtill conſtant; at leaſt heaven and nature authorized the ties which united them; at leaſt virtue was ſtill dear to them; they ſtill loved and honoured her charms; they were leſs corrupted than debaſed,

baſed. Though they were leſs worthy of felicity they ſtill continued happy.

What now are thoſe affectionate lovers who glowed with ſo refined a paſſion, and were ſo ſenſible of the worth of honour? Who can be acquainted with their condition, without ſighing over them?—Behold them a prey to guilt. Even the idea of defiling the marriage-bed does not now ſtrike them with horrour—they meditate adultery!—How! is it poſſible that they can be the ſame pair? are not their ſouls entirely altered? How could that lovely image, which the wicked never behold, be effaced in the minds where it once ſhone ſo bright? Are not they, who have once taſted of the charms of virtue, for ever after diſguſted with vice? How many ages have paſſed to produce this aſtoniſhing alteration? What length of time could be capable of deſtroying ſo delighted a rememberance, and of extinguiſhing the true ſenſe of happineſs in thoſe who had once enjoyed it? Alas! if the firſt ſtep of irregularity moves with ſlow and painful pace, how eaſy and precipitate are thoſe which follow! how great is the illuſion of paſſion! It is that which faſcinates reaſon, betrays prudence, and new-models nature before we perceive the change. A ſingle moment leads us aſtray; a ſingle ſtep draws us out of the right path. From that time an irreſiſtible propenſity hurries us on to our ruin. From that time we fall into a gulf, and ariſe frightened to find ourſelves oppreſſed with crimes, with hearts formed for virtue. My dear friend, let

let us drop the curtain. Can it be neceſſary to ſee the dangerous precipice it conceals from us, in order to avoid approaching it?—I reſume my narrative.

M. Wolmar arrived, and made no objection to the alteration in my features. My father preſſed me. The mourning for my mother was juſt over, and my grief was proof againſt time. I could form no pretence to elude my promiſe; and was under a neceſſity of fulfilling it. I thought the day which was to ſeparate me for ever from you and from myſelf would have been the laſt of my life. I could have beheld the preparations for my funeral with leſs horrour than thoſe for my marriage. The nearer the fatal moment drew, the leſs I found myſelf able to root out my firſt affections from my ſoul; my efforts rather ſerved to inflame than to extinguiſh them. At length I gave over the fruitleſs ſtruggle. At the very time that I was prepared to ſwear eternal conſtancy to another, my heart ſtill vowed eternal love to thee; and I was carried to the temple as a polluted victim, which defiles the altar on which it is ſacrificed.

When I came to the church, I felt at my enterance a kind of emotion which I had never experienced before. An inconceivable terrour ſeiſed my mind in that ſolemn and auguſt place, which was full of the Being worſhipped there. A ſudden horrour made me ſhiver. Trembling, and ready to faint, it was with difficulty I reached the altar. Far from being compoſed, I found

I found my diſorder increaſe during the ceremony, and every object I beheld ſtruck me with terrour. The gloomy light of the temple, and profound ſilence of the ſpectators, their decent and collected deportment, the train of all my relations, the aweful look of my venerable father, all contributed to give the ceremony an air of ſolemnity, which commanded my attention and reverence, and which made me tremble at the very thought of perjury. I imagined that I beheld the inſtrument of Providence, and that I heard the voice of heaven in the miniſter, who pronounced the holy liturgy with uncommon ſolemnity. The purity, the dignity, the ſanctity of marriage, ſo forcibly expreſſed in the words of Scripture, the chaſte, the ſublime duties it inculcates, and which are ſo important to the happineſs, the order, the peace, the being of human nature, ſo agreeable in themſelves to be obſerved; all conſpired to make ſuch an impreſſion upon me, that I felt a thorough revolution within me. An inviſible power ſeemed ſuddenly to rectify the diſorder of my affections, and to ſettle them according to the laws of duty and nature. The eternal and omnipreſent Power, ſaid I to myſelf, now reads the bottom of my ſoul; he compares my ſecret will with my verbal declaration; heaven and earth are witneſs to the ſolemn engagement I am going to contract; and they ſhall be witneſs of my fidelity in obſerving the obligation. What human duty

duty can they regard, who dare to violate the firſt and moſt ſacred of all?

A caſual glance on Mr. and Mrs. Orbe, who I ſaw oppoſite to each other, fixing their tender looks on me, affected me more powerfully than all the other objects around me. O moſt amiable and virtuous pair! though your love is leſs violent, are you therefore leſs cloſely attached to each other? Duty and honour are the bonds which unite you; affectionate friends! faithful couple! you do not burn with that devouring flame which conſumes the ſoul, but you love each other with a gentle and refined affection, which nouriſhes the mind, which prudence authoriſes, and reaſon directs; you, therefore, enjoy more ſubſtantial felicity. Ah! that in an union like your's, I could recover the ſame innocence, and attain the ſame happineſs! If I have not like you deſerved it, I will at leaſt endeavour to make myſelf worthy of it by your example.

Theſe ſentiments renewed by hopes, and revived by courage, I conſidered the ſacred tie I was preparing to form as a new ſtate, which would purify my ſoul, and reſtore me to a juſt ſenſe of my duty. When the miniſter aſked me, whether I promiſed perfect obedience and fidelity to him whom I received for my huſband, I made the promiſe not only with my lips but with my heart; and I will keep it inviolably till my death.

When we returned home, I ſighed for an hour's ſolitude and recollection. I obtained it,

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not without difficulty; and however eager I was to make the beſt advantage of it, I nevertheleſs entered into ſelf-examination with reluctance, being afraid leſt I ſhould diſcover that I had only been affected by ſome tranſitory impreſſions, and that at the bottom I ſhould find myſelf as unworthy a wife, as I had been an indiſcreet girl. The method of making the tryal was ſure, but dangerous; I began it by turning my thoughts on you. My heart bore witneſs that no tender recollection had profaned the ſolemn engagement I had lately made. I could not conceive, without aſtoniſhment, how your image could have forborne its obſtinate intruſion, and have left me ſo long at reſt, amidſt ſo many occaſions which might have recalled you to my mind; I ſhould have miſtruſted my inſenſibility and forgetfulneſs, as treacherous dependencies, which were too unnatural to be laſting. I found, however, that I was in no danger of deluſion: I was ſenſible that I ſtill loved you as much, if not more than ever; but I felt my affection for you without a bluſh. I found that I could venture to think of you, without forgetting that I was the wife of another. When a tacit ſelf-confeſſion reported how dear you was to me, my heart was affected, but my conſcience and my ſenſes were compoſed; and from that moment I perceived that my mind was changed in reality. What a torrent of pure joy then ruſhed into my ſoul! what tranquil ſenſations, ſo long effaced,

then

then began to revive a heart which ignominy had ſtained, and to diffuſe an unuſual ſerenity through my whole frame! I ſeemed as if I had been new born, and fancied that I was entering into another life. O gentle and balmy Virtue! I am regenerated for thee; thou alone canſt make life dear to me; to thee alone I conſecrate my being. Oh! I have too fatally experienced the loſs of thee, ever to abandon thee a ſecond time.

In the rapture of ſo great, ſo ſudden, ſo unexpected a change, I ventured to reflect on my ſituation the preceding day: I trembled, on thinking to what a ſtate of unworthy debaſement I had been reduced by forgetting what I owed to myſelf; and I ſhuddered at all the dangers I had run ſince my firſt ſtep of deviation. What a happy revolution of mind enabled me to diſcover the horrour of the crime which threw temptation before me; and how did the love of diſcretion revive within me! By what uncommon accident, ſaid I, could I hope to be more faithful to love than to honour, which I held in ſuch high eſteem? What good-fortune would prevent your inconſtancy or my own from delivering me a prey to new attachments? How could I oppoſe to another lover that reſiſtance which the firſt had conquered, and that ſhame which had been accuſtomed to yield to inclination? Should I pay more regard to the rights of extinguiſhed love, than I did to the claim of virtue, while it maintained its full empire in my

my ſoul? What ſecurity could I have to love no other but you, except that inward aſſurance which deceives all lovers, who ſwear eternal conſtancy, and inconſiderately perjure themſelves upon every change of their affections? Thus, one deviation from virtue would have led to another; and vice, grown habitual, would no longer have appeared horrible in my ſight. Fallen from honour to infamy, without any hold to ſtop me; from a ſeduced virgin I ſhould have become an abandoned woman, the ſcandal of my ſex, and the torment of my family. What has ſaved me from ſo natural a conſequence of my firſt tranſgreſſion? What checked me after my firſt guilty ſtep? What has preſerved my reputation, and the eſteem of my beloved friends? What has placed me under the protection of a virtuous and diſcreet huſband, whoſe character is amiable, whoſe perſon his agreeable, and who is full of that reſpect and affection for me which I have ſo little deſerved? What, in ſhort, enables me to aſpire after the character of a virtuous wife, and gives me courage to render myſelf worthy of that title? I ſee, I feel it; it is the friendly hand which has conducted me through the paths of darkneſs, that now removes the veil of errour from my eyes; and, in my own deſpite, reſtores me to myſelf. The gentle voice which inceſſantly murmured within me now raiſed its tone, and thundered in my ears, at the very moment that I was near being loſt for ever. The Authour of all truth would not allow me to

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quit his preſence with the conſcious guilt of deteſtable perjury; and preventing my crime by my remorſe, hath ſhown me the frightful abyſs into which I was ready to fall. Eternal Providence! who doſt make the inſect crawl, and the heavens revolve, thou art watchful over the leaſt of all thy works! thou haſt recalled me to that virtue which I was born to revere! deign, therefore, to receive from a heart purified by thy goodneſs, that homage which thou alone haſt rendered worthy thy acceptance.

That inſtant, being impreſſed with a lively ſenſe of the danger I had eſcaped, and of the ſtate of honour and ſecurity in which I was happily re-eſtabliſhed, I proſtrated myſelf on the ground, and lifting my ſuppliant hands to heaven, I invoked that Being enthroned on high, whoſe pleaſure ſupports or deſtroys, by means of our own ſtrength, that free-will he has beſtowed. I eagerly (ſaid I) embrace the proffered good, of which thou alone art the authour. I will love the huſband to whom thou haſt attached me. I will be faithful, becauſe it is the chief duty which unites private families, and ſociety in general. I will be chaſte, becauſe it is the parent virtue which nouriſhes all the reſt. I will adhere to every thing relative to the order of nature which thou haſt eſtabliſhed, and to the dictates of reaſon which I derive from thee. I recommend my heart to thy protection, and my deſires to thy guidance. Render all my actions conformable to my ſtedfaſt will, which

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is ever thine, and never more permit momentary errour to triumph over the ſettled choice of my life.

Having finiſhed this ſhort prayer, the firſt I ever made with true devotion, I found myſelf confirmed in virtuous reſolutions; it ſeemed ſo eaſy and ſo agreeable to follow theſe dictates, that I clearly perceived where I muſt hereafter reſort for that power to reſiſt my inclinations, which I could not derive from myſelf. From this new diſcovery I acquired freſh confidence, and lamented that fatal blindneſs which had ſo long concealed it from me. I had never been devoid of religion, but perhaps I had better have been wholly ſo, than to have profeſſed one which was external and mechanical; and which ſatisfied the conſcience, without affecting the heart: one which was confined to ſet forms, and taught me to believe in God at ſtated hours, without thinking of him the remainder of my time. Scrupulouſly attendant on publick worſhip, I nevertheleſs drew no advantage from it to aſſiſt me in the practice of my duty. Knowing that I was of a good family, I indulged my inclinations, was fond of ſpeculation, and put my truſt in reaſon. Not being able to reconcile the Spirit of the Goſpel with the manners of the world, nor faith with works, I ſteered a middle courſe, which ſatisfied the vanity of my wiſdom: I had one ſet of maxims for ſpeculation, and another for practice; I forgot in one place the opinions I formed in

another; I was a devotee at church, and a philoſopher at home: alas! I was nothing any where; my prayers were but words, my reaſoning mere ſophiſtry, and the only light I followed was the falſe glimering of an *ignis fatuus*, which guided me to deſtruction.

I cannot deſcribe to you how much this inward principle, which had eſcaped me till now, made me deſpiſe thoſe who had ſo ſhamefully miſled me. Tell me, I entreat you, what was the ſtrongeſt reaſon in their ſupport, and on what foundation did they reſt? A favourable inſtinct directs me to good, ſome impetuous paſſion riſes in oppoſition; it takes root in the ſame inſtant, what muſt I do to deſtroy it? From a contemplation on the order of nature, I diſcover the beauty of virtue, and from its general utility I derive its excellence. But what do theſe arguments avail, when they ſtand in competition to my private intereſt; and which in the end is of moſt conſequence to me, to procure my own happineſs at the expenſe of others, or to promote the felicity of others at the expenſe of my own happineſs? If the dread of ſhame or puniſhment deter me from committing evil for the ſake of my own private good, I have nothing more to do than to ſin in ſecret; virtue then cannot upbraid me, and if I am detected, I ſhall be puniſhed, as at Sparta, not on account of my crime, but becauſe I had not ingenuity to conceal it. In ſhort, admitting

ting the character and the love of virtue to be imprinted in my heart by nature, it will ſerve me as a rule of conduct till its impreſſions are defaced; but how ſhall I be ſure always to preſerve this inward effigy in its original purity, which has no model among ſublunary beings, to which it can be referred? Is it not evident, that irregular affections corrupt the judgement as well as the will, and that conſcience itſelf changes, and in every age, in every people, in every individual, accommodates itſelf to inconſtancy of opinion, and diverſity of prejudice?

Adore the ſupreme Being, my worthy and prudent friend; with one puff of breath you will be able to diſſipate thoſe chimeras of reaſon, which have a viſionary appearance, and which fly like ſo many ſhadows before immutable truth. Nothing exiſts but through him who is ſelf-exiſtent. It is he who directs the tendency of juſtice, fixes the baſis of virtue, and gives a recompence to a ſhort life ſpent according to his will: it is he who proclaims aloud to the guilty that their ſecret crimes are detected, and gives aſſurance to the righteous in obſcurity, that their virtues are not without a witneſs: it is he, it is his unalterable ſubſtance, that is the true model of thoſe perfections of which we all bear the image within us. It is in vain that our paſſions disfigure it; its traces, which are allied to the infinite Being, ever preſent themſelves to our reaſon, and ſerve to re-eſtabliſh what errour and impoſture have perverted. Theſe diſtinctions

tions ſeem to me extremely natural; common ſenſe is ſufficient to point them out. Every thing which we cannot ſeparate from the idea of divine eſſence, is God; all the reſt is the work of men. It is by the contemplation of this divine model, that the ſoul becomes refined and exalted; that it learns to deſpiſe low deſires, and to triumph over baſe inclinations. A heart impreſſed with theſe ſublime truths is ſuperior to the mean paſſions of human nature; the idea of infinite grandeur ſubdues the pride of man; the delight of contemplation abſtracts him from groſs deſires; and if the immenſe Being, who is the ſubject of his thoughts, had no exiſtence, it would nevertheleſs be of uſe to exerciſe his mind in ſuch meditations, in order to make him more maſter of himſelf, more vigorous, more diſcreet, and more happy.

Do you require a particular inſtance of thoſe vain ſubtleties framed by that ſelf-ſufficient reaſon, which ſo vainly relies on its own ſtrength? Let us coolly examine the arguments of thoſe philoſophers, thoſe worthy advocates of a crime, which never yet ſeduced any whoſe minds were not previouſly corrupted. Might one not conclude that by a direct attack on the moſt holy and moſt ſolemn of all contracts, thoſe dangerous diſputants were determined at one ſtroke to annihilate human ſociety in general, which is founded on the faith of engagements? But let us conſider, I beſeech you, how they exculpate ſecret adultery? It is becauſe, ſay they, no miſchief

miſchief ariſes from it; not even to the huſband, who is ignorant of the wrong. But can they be certain that he will always remain ignorant of the injury offered him? Is it ſufficient to authoriſe perjury and infidelity, that they do no wrong to others? Is the miſchief which the guilty do to themſelves not ſufficient to create an abhorrence of guilt? Is it no crime to be falſe to our word, to deſtroy, as far as we are able, the obligation of oaths, and the moſt inviolable contracts? Is it no crime to take pains to render ourſelves falſe, treacherous, and perjured? Is it no crime to form attachments which occaſion you to deſire the prejudice, and to wiſh the death of another? even the death of one whom we ought to love above others, and with whom we have ſworn to live? Is not that ſtate in itſelf an evil, which is productive of a thouſand conſequential crimes? Even good itſelf, if attended with ſo many miſchiefs, would, for that reaſon only, be an evil.

Shall one of the parties pretend to innocence, who may chance to be diſengaged, and have pledged his faith to no one? He is groſsly miſtaken. It is not only the intereſt of huſband and wife, but it is the common benefit of mankind, that the purity of marriage be preſerved unſullied. Whenever two perſons are joined together by that ſolemn contract, all mankind enter into a tacit engagement to reſpect the ſacred tie, and to honour the conjugal union; and this appears to be a powerful reaſon againſt

clandeſtine marriages, which, as they expreſs no publick ſign of ſuch an union, expoſe innocent maids to the temptation of adulterous paſſion. The publick are in ſome meaſure guarantees of a contract which paſſes in their preſence; and we may venture to ſay, that the honour of a modeſt woman is under the ſpecial protection of all good and worthy people. Whoever, therefore, dares to ſeduce her, is criminal! Firſt, becauſe he has tempted her to ſin, and that every one is an accomplice in thoſe crimes which he perſuades others to commit: in the next place, he ſins directly himſelf, becauſe he violates the publick and ſacred faith of matrimony, without which no order or regularity can ſubſiſt in ſociety.

The crime, ſay they, is ſecret, conſequently no injury can reſult from it to any one. If theſe philoſophers believe the exiſtence of a God, and the immortality of the human ſoul, can they call that crime ſecret which has for its witneſs the Being principally offended, and the only righteous judge? It is a ſtrange kind of a ſecret which is hid from all eyes except thoſe from which it is our intereſt moſt to conceal it! If they do not, however, admit of the omnipreſence of the Divinity, yet, how can they dare to affirm that they do injury to no one? How can they prove that it is a matter of indifference to a parent to educate heirs who are ſtrangers to his blood; to be incumbered perhaps with more children than he would otherwiſe have had, and to be obliged to diſtribute his fortune among thoſe pledges of his diſhonour,

diſhonour, without feeling for them any ſenſations of parental tenderneſs and natural affection? If we ſuppoſe theſe philoſophers to be materialiſts, we have then a ſtronger foundation for oppoſing their tenets by the gentle dictates of nature, which plead in every breaſt againſt the principles of a vain philoſophy, which have never yet been controverted by ſound reaſoning. In ſhort, if the body alone produces cogitation, and ſentiment depends entirely on organization, will there not be a more ſtrict analogy between two beings of the ſame blood? Will they not have a more violent attachment to each other? Will there not be a reſemblance between their ſouls as well as their features, which is a moſt powerful motive to inſpire mutual affection?

Is it doing no injury, therefore, in your opinion, to deſtroy or diſturb this natural union by the mixture of adulterate blood, and to pervert the principle of that mutual affection which ought to cement all the members of one family? Who would not ſhudder with horrour at the thoughts of having one infant changed for another by a nurſe? And is it a leſs crime to make ſuch a change before the infant is born?

If I conſider my own ſex in particular, what miſchiefs do I diſcover in this incontinency, which is ſuppoſed to do no injury! The debaſement of a guilty woman, who, after the loſs of her honour, ſoon forfeits all other virtues, is alone ſufficient. What manifeſt ſymptoms convey to a tender huſband the intelligence of that

injury which they think to juſtify by ſecreſy! the loſs of the wife's affection is ſufficient proof. To what purpoſe will all her affected endeavours ſerve, but to manifeſt her indifference the more? Can we impoſe upon the jealous eye of love by feigned careſſes? And what torture muſt he feel, who is attached to a beloved object, whoſe hand embraces, while her heart rejects him! Admitting, however, that fortune ſhould favour a conduct which ſhe has ſo often betrayed, and to ſay nothing of the raſhneſs of truſting our own affected innocence and another's peace to precautions which Providence often thinks proper to diſconcert———yet, what deceit, what falſehood, what impoſture, is requiſite to conceal a criminal commerce, to deceive a huſband, to corrupt ſervants, and to impoſe upon the publick! What a diſgrace to the accomplices! what an example to children! What muſt become of their education amidſt ſo much ſollicitude how to gratify a guilty paſſion with impunity? How is the peace of the family and the union of the heads of it to be maintained? What! in all theſe circumſtances does the huſband receive no injury? But who can make him recompenſe for a heart which ſhould have been devoted to him? Who can reſtore him the affections of a valuable woman? Who can give him peace of mind, and conjugal confidence? Who can cure him of his well-grounded ſuſpicions? Who can engage a father to truſt the feelings of nature when he embraces his child?

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With regard to the pretended connexions which may be formed in families by means of adultery and infidelity, it cannot be conſidered as a ſerious argument, but rather as an abſurd and brutal mockery, which deſerves no other anſwer than diſdain and indignation. The treaſons, the quarrels, the battles, the murthers with which this irregularity has in all ages peſtered the earth, are ſufficient proofs how far the peace and union of mankind is to be promoted by attachments founded in guilt. If any ſocial principle reſults from this vile and deſpicable commerce, it may be compared to that which unites a band of robbers, and which ought to be deſtroyed and annulled, in order to enſure the ſafety of lawful communities.

I have endeavoured to ſuppreſs the indignation which theſe principles excited in me, in order to diſcuſs them with greater moderation. The more extravagant and ridiculous I find them, the more I am intereſted to refute them, in order to make myſelf aſhamed of having liſtened to them with too little reſerve. You ſee how ill they can endure the teſt of ſound reaſon; but from whence can we derive the ſacred dictates of reaſon, if not from him who is the ſource of all? And what ſhall we think of thoſe who, in order to miſlead mankind, pervert this heavenly ray, which he gave them as an unerring guide to virtue? Let us abandon this philoſophy of words; let us diſtruſt a fallacious virtue, which undermines all other virtues,

and attempts to vindicate every vice, to authoriſe the practice of every ſpecies of guilt. The ſureſt method of diſcovering our duty is diligently to examine what is right, and we cannot long continue the examination, without recurring to the Authour of all goodneſs. This is what I have done ſince I have taken pains to rectify my principles, and improve my reaſon: this is a taſk you will perform better than I, when you are diſpoſed to purſue the ſame courſe. It is a comfort to me to reflect, that you have frequently nouriſhed my mind with elevated notions of religion, and you, whoſe heart diſguiſed nothing from me, would not have talked to me in that ſtrain had your ſentiments differed from your declaration. I recollect with pleaſure that converſations of this kind were ever delightful to us. We never found the preſence of the ſupreme Being troubleſome: it rather filled us with hope than terrour: it never yet diſmayed any but guilty ſouls; we were pleaſed to think that he was witneſs to our interviews, and we loved to exalt our minds to the contemplation of the Deity. If we were now-and-then abaſed by ſhame, we reflected, that at leaſt he was privy to our inmoſt thoughts, and that idea renewed our tranquillity.

If this confidence led us aſtray, nevertheleſs the principle on which it was founded is alone capable of reclaiming us to virtue. Is it not unworthy of a man to be always at variance with himſelf, to have one rule for his actions, another for

for his opinions, to think as if he was abſtracted from matter, to act as if he was devoid of ſoul, and never to be capable of appropriating a ſingle action of his life to his own entire ſelf? For my own part, I think the principles of the ancients are ſufficient to fortify us, when they are not confined to mere ſpeculation. Weakneſs is incident to human nature, and the merciful Being, who made man frail, will no doubt pardon his frailty; but guilt is a quality which belongs only to the wicked, and will not remain unpuniſhed by the Authour of all juſtice. An infidel, who is otherwiſe well inclined, practices thoſe virtues he admires; he acts from taſte, not from choice. If all his deſires happen to be regular, he indulges them without reſerve. He would gratify them in the ſame manner, if they were irregular; for what ſhould reſtrain him? But he who acknowledges and worſhips the common Father of mankind perceives that he is deſtined for nobler purpoſes. An ardent wiſh to fulfil the end of his being animates his zeal; he follows a more certain rule of action than appetite; he knows how to do what is right at the expenſe of his inclinations, and to ſacrifice the deſires of his heart to the call of duty. Such, my dear friend, is the heroick ſacrifice required of us both. The love which attached us would have proved the delight of our lives; it ſurvived hope, it bid defiance to time and abſence; it endured every kind of proof. So ſincere a paſſion ought never

to have decayed of itſelf; it was worthy to be ſacrificed to virtue alone.

I muſt obſerve further. All circumſtances are altered between us, and your heart muſt accommodate itſelf to the change. The wife of Mr. Wolmar is not your Eloiſa; your change of ſentiment with regard to her is unavoidable; and it depends upon your own choice to make the alteration redound to your honour, according to the election you make of vice or virtue. I recollect a paſſage in an authour, whoſe authority you will not controvert. Love, ſays he, is deſtitute of its greateſt charm when it is abandoned by honour. To be ſenſible of its true value, it muſt warm the heart, and exalt us, by raiſing the object of our deſires. Take away the idea of perfection, and you deprive love of all its enthuſiaſm; baniſh eſteem, and love is no more. How can a woman honour the man whom ſhe ought to deſpiſe? How can he himſelf honour her who has not ſcrupled to abandon herſelf to a vile ſeducer? Thus they will ſoon entertain a mutual contempt for each other. Love, that celeſtial principle, will be debaſed into a ſhameful commerce between them. They will have loſt their honour without attaining felicity*. This, my dear friend, is our leſſon, penned by your own hand: never were our hearts more agreeably attached, and never was honour ſo dear to us, as in thoſe happy days when this letter was written. Reflect then, how we ſhould be miſled at this time by a guilty paſſion, nouriſhed

* See the firſt vol. letter XXIV.

nouriſhed at the expenſe of the moſt agreeable tranſports which can inſpire the ſoul! The horrour of vice, which is ſo natural to us both, would ſoon extend to the partner of our guilt; we ſhould entertain mutual hatred, for having loved each other indiſcreetly, and remorſe would quickly extinguiſh affection. Is it not better to refine a generous ſentiment, in order to render it permanent? Is it not better at leaſt to preſerve what we may grant with innocence? Is not this preſerving what is more delightful than all other enjoyments? Yes, my dear and worthy friend, to keep our love inviolable we muſt renounce each other. Let us forget all that has paſſed, and continue the lover of my ſoul. This idea is ſo agreeable that it compenſates for every thing.

Thus have I drawn a faithful picture of my life, and given you a genuine detail of every inward ſentiment. Be aſſured that I love you ſtill. I am ſtill attached to you with ſuch a tender and lively affection, that any other than myſelf would be alarmed: but I feel a principle of a different kind within me, which ſecures me againſt any apprehenſions from ſuch an attachment. I perceive that the nature of my affection is entirely altered, and in this reſpect, my paſt failings are the grounds of my preſent ſecurity. I know that ſcrupulous decorum and the parade of virtue might require more of me, and not be ſatisfied, unleſs I utterly forgot you. But I have a more certain rule of conduct, and

will abide by it. I attend to the ſecret dictates of conſcience; I find nothing there which reproaches me, and it never deceives thoſe who conſult it with ſincerity. If this be not ſufficient to juſtify me before the world, it is enough to reſtore me to compoſure of mind. How has this happy change been produced? I know not how. All I know is, that I wiſhed for it moſt ardently. God alone has accompliſhed the reſt. I am convinced that a mind once corrupted will ever remain ſo, and will never recover of itſelf, unleſs ſome ſudden revolution, ſome unexpected change of fortune and condition, entirely alters its connexions. When all its habits are deſtroyed, and all its paſſions modified, by that thorough revolution, it ſometimes reſumes its primitive character, and becomes like a new being recently formed by the hands of nature. Then the recollection of its former unworthineſs may ſerve as a preſervative againſt relapſe. Yeſterday we were baſe and abject, to-day we are ſpirited and magnanimous. By thus making a cloſe compariſon between the two different ſtates, we become more ſenſible of the value of that which we have recovered, and more attentive to ſupport it.

My marriage has made me experience ſomething like the change I endeavour to explain to you. This tie, which I dreaded ſo much, has extricated me from a ſlavery much more dreadful; and my huſband becomes dearer to me for having *reſtored* me to myſelf.

You and I were, however, too closely attached for a change of this kind to destroy the union between us. If you lose an affectionate mistress you gain a faithful friend; and whatever we may have imagined in our state of delusion, I cannot believe that the alteration is to your prejudice. Let it, I conjure you, encourage you to take the same resolution that I have formed, to become hereafter more wise and virtuous, and to refine the lessons of philosophy by the precepts of Christian morality. I shall never be thoroughly happy, unless you likewise enjoy happiness; and I am more convinced than ever, that there is no real felicity without virtue. If you sincerely love me, afford me the agreeable consolation to find that our hearts correspond in their return to virtue, as they unhappily agreed in their deviation from it.

I need not make any apology for the length of this epistle. Were you less dear to me I should have shortened it. Before I conclude, I have one favour to request of you. Mr. Wolmar is a stranger to my past conduct; but a frank sincerity is part of the duty I owe to him: I should have made the confession an hundred times; you alone have restrained me. Though I am acquainted with Mr. Wolmar's discretion and moderation, yet to mention your name is always to bring you in competition, and I would not do it without your consent. Can this request be disagreeable to you? And when I *flatter myself* to obtain your leave, do I depend

too much on you or on myſelf? Conſider, I beſeech you, that this reſerve is inconſiſtent with innocence, that it grows every day more inſupportable, and that I ſhall not enjoy a moment's reſt till I receive your anſwer.

LETTER CXII.

TO ELOISA.

AND wilt thou no longer be my Eloiſa? Ah! do not tell me ſo, thou moſt worthy of all thy ſex! Thou art more mine than ever. Thy merit claims homage from the whole world. It was thee whom I adored, when I firſt became ſuſceptible of the impreſſions of beauty: and I ſhall never ceaſe to adore thee, even after death, if my ſoul ſtill retains any recollection of thoſe truely celeſtial charms which were my ſole delight when living. The courageous effort, by which you have recovered all your virtue, renders you more equal to your lovely ſelf. No, whatever torment the ſenſation and the confeſſion give me, yet I muſt declare that you never were my Eloiſa more perfectly than at this moment in which you renounce me. Alas! I regain my Eloiſa, by loſing her for ever. But I, whoſe heart ſhudders even at an attempt to imitate your virtue; I, who am tormented with a criminal paſſion, which I can neither ſupport nor ſubdue; am I the man I vainly imagined myſelf to be? was I worthy of your eſteem? what

what right had I to importune you with my complaints and my deſpair? did it become me to preſume a ſigh for you? Ah! what was I that I ſhould dare to love Eloiſa?

Fool that I am! as though I did not feel myſelf ſufficiently humbled, without taking pains to ſeek freſh circumſtances of humiliation! why ſhould I increaſe my mortification by enumerating diſtinctions unknown to love? It was that which exalted me; and which made me your equal. Our hearts were blended, we ſhared our ſentiments in common, and mine partook of the elevation of your's. Behold me now ſunk into my priſtine baſeneſs! Thou gentle hope; which didſt ſo long feed my ſoul to deceive me, art thou then extinguiſhed without a proſpect of return? will ſhe not be mine? muſt I loſe her for ever? does ſhe make another happy?——O rage! O torments of hell!——O faithleſs! ought you ever?—pardon me, pardon me, deareſt madam! have pity on my diſtraction! O you had too much reaſon when you told me, ſhe is no more——She is, indeed, no more that affectionate Eloiſa to whom I could diſcloſe every emotion of my heart. How could I complain when I found myſelf unhappy? could ſhe liſten to my complaints? was I unhappy?—what then am I now? No, I will not make you bluſh for yourſelf or me. Hope is no more; we muſt renounce each other; we muſt part. Virtue herſelf has pronounced the decree, and your hand has been capable of tranſcribing it. Let

us

us forget each other——Forget me, at leaſt. I am determined. I ſwear, that I will never ſpeak to you of myſelf again,

May I yet venture to talk of you, and to intereſt myſelf in what is now the only object of my concern? I mean your happineſs. In deſcribing to me the ſtate of your mind, you ſay nothing of your preſent ſituation. As a reward of the ſacrifice I have made, of which you ought to be ſenſible, at leaſt deign to deliver me from this inſupportable doubt. Eloiſa, are you happy? If you are, give me the only comfort of which my deſpair is ſuſceptible: if you are not, be compaſſionate enough to tell me ſo; my miſery then will be leſs durable.

The more I reflect on the confeſſion you propoſe to make, the leſs I am inclined to conſent to it; and the ſame motive which always deprived me of reſolution to deny your requeſts renders me inexorable in this particular. It is a ſubject of the laſt importance, and I conjure you to weigh my reaſons with attention. Firſt, your exceſſive delicacy ſeems to lead you into a miſtake, and I do not ſee on what foundation the moſt rigid virtue can exact ſuch a confeſſion from you. No engagement whatever can have any retro-active effect. We cannot bind ourſelves with reſpect to time paſt, nor promiſe what is not in our power to perform: how can you be obliged to give your huſband an account of the uſe you formerly made of your liberty, or how can you be reſponſible to him for a

fidelity which you never promiſed to him? Do not deceive yourſelf, Eloiſa; it is not to your huſband, it is to your friend, that you have violated your engagement. Before we were ſeparated by your father's tyranny, heaven and nature had formed us for each other. By entering into other connexions you have been guilty of a crime which love and honour can never forgive, and it is I who have a right to reclaim the prize which M. Wolmar has raviſhed from my arms.

If, under any circumſtances, duty can exact ſuch a confeſſion, it is when the danger of a relapſe obliges a prudent woman to take precautions for her ſecurity. But your letter has given me more light into your real ſentiments than you imagine. In reading it I felt in my own heart how much your's, upon a near approach, nay, even in the boſom of love, would have abhorred a criminal connexion, the horrour of which was only diminiſhed by its diſtance.

As duty and honour do not require ſuch confidence, prudence and reaſon forbid it; for it is running a needleſs riſk of forfeiting every thing that is dear in wedlock, the attachment, of a huſband, mutual confidence, and the peace of the family. Have you thoroughly weighed the conſequences of ſuch a ſtep? Are you ſufficiently acquainted with your huſband, to be certain of the effect it will produce in his diſpoſition? Do you know how many men there are, who, from ſuch a confeſſion, would conceive

ceive an immoderate jealouſy, and an invincible contempt, and would probably be provoked even to attempt your life? In ſuch a nice examination we ought to attend to time, place, and the difference of characters. In the country where I reſide at preſent, ſuch a confidence would be attended with no danger; and they who make ſo light of conjugal fidelity are not people to be violently affected by any frailty of conduct prior to the engagement. Not to mention reaſons which ſometimes render thoſe confeſſions indiſpenſable, and which cannot be applied to your caſe, I know ſome women of tolerable eſtimation, who, with very little riſk, have made a merit of that kind of ſincerity, in order perhaps by that ſacrifice to obtain a confidence which they might afterwards abuſe at will. But in thoſe countries where the ſanctity of marriage is more reſpected, in thoſe countries where that ſacred tie forms a ſolid union, and where huſbands have a real attachment to their wives, they require a more ſevere account of their conduct; they expect that their hearts ſhould never have felt any tender affections but for themſelves; uſurping a right which they have not, they unreaſonbly expect their wives to have been their's even before they belonged to them, and they are as unwilling to excuſe an abuſe of liberty as a real infidelity.

Believe me, virtuous Eloiſa, and diſtruſt this fruitleſs and unneceſſary zeal. Keep this dangerous ſecret, which nothing can oblige you to reveal;

reveal; the diſcovery of which might utterly ruin you, without being of any advantage to your huſband. If he is worthy of ſuch a confeſſion, it will diſturb his peace of mind, and you will have the mortification of having afflicted him without reaſon; if he is unworthy, why will you give him a pretence for uſing you ill? How do you know whether your virtue, which has defended you from the aſſaults of your heart, will likewiſe ſupport you againſt the influence of domeſtick troubles daily reviving? Do not voluntarily increaſe your misfortunes, leſt they become too powerful for your reſiſtance, and you ſhould at length relapſe by means of your ſcruples into a worſe condition than that from which you have with ſo much difficulty diſengaged yourſelf. Prudence is the baſis of every virtue; conſult that, I entreat you, in this moſt important criſis of your life; and if the fatal ſecret oppreſſes you ſo violently, wait at leaſt, before you unboſom yourſelf, till time and a length of years ſhall have made you more perfectly acquainted with your huſband: ſtay till his heart, now affected by the power of your beauty, ſhall be ſuſceptible of thoſe more laſting impreſſions, which the charms of your diſpoſition cannot fail to make, and till he is become habitually ſenſible of your perfections. After all, if theſe reaſons, powerful as they are, ſhould not convince you, yet do not refuſe to liſten to the voice which utters them. O Eloiſa! hearken to a man, who is yet, in ſome degree, ſuſceptible of virtue,

virtue, and who has a right to expect ſome conceſſion from you at leaſt, in return for the ſacrifice he has made you to-day.

I muſt conclude this letter. I find that I cannot forbear reſuming a ſtrain to which you muſt no longer give ear. Eloiſa, I muſt part with you! Young as I am, am I already deſtined to renounce felicity? O time never to be recalled! time irrevocably paſt! ſource of everlaſting ſorrows! pleaſures, tranſports, delightful ecſtacies, delicious moments, celeſtial raptures! My love, my only love, the honour and delight of my ſoul! farewell for ever!

LETTER CXIII.

FROM ELOISA.

YOU aſk me, whether I am happy? The queſtion affects me, and by your manner of aſking it, you facilitate my anſwer; for ſo far from wiſhing to baniſh you from my memory, as you deſire me, I confeſs that I ſhould not be happy was your affection for me to ceaſe: yet at preſent I am happy in moſt reſpects, and nothing but your felicity is wanting to complete mine. If, in my laſt, I avoided making any mention of M. Wolmar, it was out of tenderneſs to you. I was too well acquainted with your ſenſibility of temper, not to be under apprehenſions of irritating your pain; but your ſollicitude with regard to my felicity obliging me to mention him

on

on whom it depends, I cannot ſpeak of him without doing juſtice to his worth, as becomes his wife, and a friend to truth.

M. Wolmar is near fifty years of age; but by means of an uniform regular courſe of life, and a ſerenity not ruffled by any violent paſſions, he has preſerved ſuch a healthy conſtitution, and ſuch a florid complexion, that he ſcarce appears to be forty, and he bears no ſymptoms of age, but prudence and experience. His countenance is noble and engaging, his addreſs open and unaffected, his manner rather ſincere than courteous; he ſpeaks little and with great judgement, but without any affectation of being conciſe and ſententious. His behaviour is the ſame to every one, he neither courts nor ſhuns any individual, and he never gives any preference but what reaſon juſtifies.

In ſpite of his natural indifference, his heart, ſeconding my father's inclinations, entertained a liking for me, and for the firſt time formed a tender attachment. This moderate and laſting affection has been governed by ſuch ſtrict rules of decorum, and obſerved ſuch a conſtant uniformity, that he was under no neceſſity of altering his manners on changing his condition, and, without violating conjugal decorum, his behaviour to me now is the ſame as it was before marriage. I never ſaw him either gay or melancholy, but always contented; he never talks to me of himſelf, and ſeldom of me; he is not in continual ſearch after me, but he does not

ſeem

ſeem diſpleaſed that I ſhould ſeek his company, and he ſeems to part from me unwillingly. He is ſerious without diſpoſing others to be grave; on the contrary, his ſerenity of manners ſeems an invitation to me to be ſprightly; and as the pleaſures I reliſh are the only pleaſures of which he is ſuſceptible, an endeavour to amuſe myſelf is among the duties I owe to him. In one word, he wiſhes to ſee me happy; he has not told me ſo, but his conduct declares it; and to wiſh the happineſs of a wife, is to make her really happy.

With all the attention with which I have been able to obſerve him, I cannot diſcover any particular paſſion to which he is attached, except his affection for me: it is, however, ſo even and temperate, that one would conclude he had power to limit the degree of his paſſion, and that he had determined not to love beyond the bounds of diſcretion. He is in reality what Lord B—— is in his own imagination; in this reſpect I find him greatly preferable to thoſe paſſionate lovers of whom we are ſo fond; for the heart deceives us a thouſand ways, and acts from a ſuſpicious principle; but reaſon always propoſes a juſt end; the rules of duty which it enjoins are ſure, evident, and practicable; and whenever our reaſon is led aſtray we enter into idle ſpeculations, which were never intended to be objects of her examination.

M. Wolmar's chief delight is obſervation. He loves to judge of men's characters and actions. He generally forms his judgement with great

great impartiality and profound penetration. If an enemy were to do him an injury, he would diſcuſs every motive and expedient with as much compoſure as if he was tranſacting any indifferent concern. I do not know by what means he has heard of you, but he has often ſpoken of you with great eſteem to me, and I am ſure he is incapable of diſguiſe. I have imagined ſometimes that he took particular notice of me during theſe converſations; but in all probability, the obſervation I apprehended was nothing but the ſecret reproach of an alarmed conſcience. However it be, in this reſpect I did my duty; neither fear nor ſhame occaſioned me to ſhow an unjuſt reſerve; and I did you juſtice before him, as I now do him juſtice before you.

I forgot to tell you concerning our income, and the management of it. The wreck of M. Wolmar's inheritance, with the addition from my father, who has only reſerved a penſion for himſelf, makes up a handſome and moderate fortune, which M. Wolmar uſes with generoſity and diſcretion, by maintaining in his family not an inconvenient and vain diſplay of luxury*, but

* No aſſociation is more common than pride and ſtinginess. We take from nature, from real pleaſures, nay from the ſtock of neceſſaries, what we laviſh upon opinion. One man adorns his palace at the expence of his kitchen; another prefers a fine ſervice of plate to a good dinner; a third makes a ſumptuous entertainment, and ſtarves himſelf the reſt of the year. When I ſee a ſide-board richly decorated,

but plenty, with the real conveniences of life; and by diſtributing neceſſaries among his indigent neighbours. The œconomy he has eſtabliſhed in his houſehold is the image of that order which reigns in his own breaſt; and his little family ſeems to be a model of that regularity which is obſervable in the government of the world. You neither diſcover that inflexible formality which is rather inconvenient than uſeful, and which no one but he who exacts it can endure; nor do you perceive that miſtaken confuſion, which, by being encumbered with ſuperfluities, renders every thing uſeleſs. The maſter's hand is ſeen throughout, without being felt, and he made his firſt arragement with ſo much diſcretion, that every thing now goes on by

decorated, I expect the wine to be very indifferent. How often in the country, when we breath the freſh morning air, are we tempted by the proſpect of a fine garden! we riſe early, and by walking gain a keen appetite, which makes us wiſh for beakfaſt. Perhaps the domeſtick is out of the way, or proviſions are wanting, or the lady has not given her orders, and you are tired to death with waiting. Sometimes people prevent your deſires, and make you a very pompous offer of every thing, upon condition that you accept of nothing. You muſt faſt till three o'clock, or breakfaſt with the tulips. I remember to have walked in a very beautiful park, which belonged to a lady, who though extremely fond of coffee, never drank any but when it was at a very low price; yet ſhe very liberally allowed her gardener a ſalary of a thouſand crowns. For my part, I ſhould chooſe to have tulips leſs finely variegated, and to drink coffee whenever my appetite called for it.

by itſelf; and regularity is preſerved, without any abridgement of liberty.

This, my worthy friend, is a ſuccinct but faithful account of M. Wolmar's character, as far as I have been able to diſcover it ſince I lived with him. Such as he appeared to me the firſt day, ſuch he ſeemed the laſt, without any alteration; which induces me to hope that I know him thoroughly, and that I have no further diſcoveries to make; for I cannot conceive any change in his behaviour which will not be to his diſadvantage.

From this account, you may anticipate the anſwer to your queſtion, and you muſt think deſpicably of me not to ſuppoſe me happy, when I have ſo much reaſon to be ſo. What led me into a miſtake, and what perhaps ſtill miſleads you, is the opinion, that love is neceſſary to make the married ſtate happy. My good friend, this is a vulgar errour; honour, virtue, a certain conformity, not ſo much of age and condition as of temper and inclination, are the requiſites in the conjugal ſtate; nevertheleſs, it muſt not be inferred from hence that this union does not produce an affectionate attachment, which, though it does not amount to love, is not leſs agreeable, and is much more permanent. Love is attended with a continual inquietude of jealouſy, or the dread of ſeparation, by no means ſuitable with a married life, which ſhould be a ſtate of peace and tranquillity. The intent of matrimony is not for man and wife to be always taken

taken up with each other, but jointly to diſcharge the duties of civil ſociety, to govern their family with prudence, and educate their children with diſcretion. Lovers attend to nothing but each other; they are inceſſantly engaged with each other; and all that they regard, is how to ſhow their mutual affection. But this is not enough for a married pair, who have ſo many other objects to engage their attention. There is no paſſion whatever which expoſes us to ſuch deluſion as that of love. We take its violence for a ſymptom of its duration; the heart, over-burthened with ſuch an agreeable ſenſation, extends itſelf to futurity; and while the heat of love continues, we flatter ourſelves that it will never cool. But, on the contrary, it is conſumed by its own ardour; it glows in youth, it grows faint with decaying beauty, it is utterly extinguiſhed by the froſt of age; and ſince the beginning of the world, there never was an inſtance of two lovers who ſighed for each other when they became grey-headed. We may be aſſured that ſooner or later adoration will ceaſe; then the idol which we worſhipped being demoliſhed, we reciprocally ſee each other in a true light. We look with ſurpriſe for the object on which we doated, not being able to diſcover it more. We are diſpleaſed with that which remains in its ſtead, and which our imagination often diſfigures, as much as it embelliſhed it before; there are few people, ſays Rochefoucault, who are not aſhamed of having loved

loved each other when their affection is extinguiſhed. How much is it to be dreaded, therefore, leſt theſe too lively ſenſations ſhould be ſucceeded by an irkſome ſtate of mind; leſt their decline, inſtead of ſtopping at indifference, ſhould even reach abſolute diſguſt; leſt, in ſhort, being entirely ſatiated, they, who were too paſſionately fond of each other as lovers, ſhould come to hate each other as huſband and wife! My dear friend, you always appeared amiable in my eyes, too fatally ſo for my innocence and repoſe; but I never yet ſaw you but in the character of a lover, and how do I know in what light you would have appeared when your paſſion was no more? I muſt confeſs, that when love expired, it would ſtill have left you in poſſeſſion of virtue; but is that alone ſufficient to make an union happy which the heart ought to cement? And how many virtuous men have made intolerable huſbands? In all theſe reſpects you may ſay the ſame of me.

As to M. Wolmar, no deluſion is the foundation of our mutual liking; we ſee each other in a true light; the ſentiment which unites us is not the blind tranſport of paſſionate deſire, but a conſtant and invariable attachment between two rational people, who being deſtined to paſs the remainder of their lives together, are content with their lot, and endeavour to make themſelves mutually agreeable. It ſeems as if we could not have ſuited each other better, had we been formed on purpoſe for our union.

Had his heart been as tender as mine, it is impoſſible but ſo much ſenſibility on each ſide muſt ſometimes have claſhed, and occaſioned diſagreements. If I was as compoſed as he, there would be too much indifference between us, and our union would be leſs pleaſing and agreeable. If he did not love me, we ſhould be uneaſy together; if his love for me was too paſſionate, he would be troubleſome to me. We are each of us exactly made for the other; he inſtructs me, I enliven him; the value of both is increaſed by our union, and we ſeem deſtined to form but one ſoul between us; to which he gives intelligence, and I direct the will. Even his advanced age redounds to our common advantage; for with the paſſion which agitated me, it is certain that had he been younger, I ſhould have married him with more unwillingneſs, and my extreme reluctance would probably have prevented the happy revolution I have experienced.

My worthy friend, heaven directs the good intention of parents, and rewards the docility of children. God forbid that I ſhould wiſh to inſult your affliction. Nothing but a ſtrong deſire of giving you the firmeſt aſſurance with reſpect to my preſent condition could induce me to add what I am going to mention. If, with the ſentiments I formerly entertained for you, with the knowledge I have ſince acquired, I was once more my own miſtreſs, and at liberty to chooſe a huſband, I call that Being who has vouchſafed

vouchſafed to enlighten me, and who reads the bottom of my heart, to witneſs my ſincerity, when I declare that I ſhould make choice, not of you, but Mr. Wolmar.

Perhaps it may be neceſſary, to complete your cure, that I ſhould inform you of what further remains in my mind. Mr. Wolmar is much older than I am. If, to puniſh my failings, heaven ſhould deprive me of a worthy huſband, whom I have ſo little deſerved, it is my firm reſolution never to eſpouſe another. If he has not had the good fortune to meet with a chaſte virgin, at leaſt he will leave behind him a continent widow. You know me too well, to imagine that, after I have made this declaration, I ſhall ever recede from it.

What I have ſaid to remove your doubts may in ſome meaſure ſerve to reſolve your objections againſt the confeſſion which I think it my duty to make to my huſband. He is too diſcreet to puniſh me for a mortifying ſtep which repentance alone may attone for; and I am not more incapable of the artifice common to the women you ſpeak of, than he is of harbouring ſuch a ſuſpicion. With reſpect to the reaſon you aſſign why ſuch a confeſſion is needleſs, it is certainly ſophiſtical; for, though we can be under no obligation to a huſband, as ſuch, before marriage, yet that does not authoriſe one to paſs upon him for what one really is not. I perceived this before I married him; and though the oath which my father extorted from me

prevented me from diſcharging my duty in this reſpect, I am not the leſs blameable, ſince it is a crime to take an unjuſt oath, and a further crime to keep it. But I had another reaſon, which my heart dared not avow, and which made my guilt greater ſtill. Thank heaven, that reaſon ſubſiſts no longer.

A conſideration more juſt, and of greater weight with me, is the danger of unneceſſarily diſturbing the peace of a worthy man, who derives his happineſs from the eſteem he bears to his wife. It certainly is not now in his power to break the tie which binds us together, nor in mine to have been more worthy of his choice. Therefore, by an indiſcreet confidence, I run the riſk of afflicting him without any advantage, and without reaping any other benefit from my ſincerity, than that of diſcharging my mind of a cruel ſecret, which oppreſſes me heavily. I am ſenſible that I ſhall be more compoſed when I have made the diſcovery; but perhaps he would be leſs happy, and to prefer my own peace to his would be a bad method of making reparation for my faults.

What then ſhall I do in this dilemma? Till heaven ſhall better inſtruct me in my duty I will follow your friendly advice; I will be ſilent; conceal my failings from my huſband, and endeavour to repair them by a conduct which may hereafter ſecure me a pardon.

To begin this neceſſary reformation, you muſt conſent, my dear friend, that from this time all corre-

correſpondence between us ſhall ceaſe. If Mr. Wolmar had received my confeſſion, he might have determined how far we ought to gratify the ſenſations of friendſhip, and give innocent proofs of our mutual attachment; but ſince I dare not conſult him in this particlar, I have learned to my coſt how far habits, the moſt juſtifiable in appearance, are capable of leading us aſtray. It is time to grow diſcreet. Notwithſtanding I think my heart ſecurely fortified, yet I will no longer venture to be judge in my own cauſe; nor, now I am a wife, will I give way to the ſame preſumption which betrayed me when I was a maid. This is the laſt letter you will ever receive from me. I entreat you never to write to me again. Nevertheleſs, I ſhall always continue to intereſt myſelf with the moſt tender concern for your welfare, and as my ſentiment in this reſpect is as pure as the light, I ſhould be glad to hear of you occaſionally, and to find you in poſſeſſion of that happineſs you deſerve. You may write to Mr. Orbe from time to time, when you have any thing intereſting to communicate. I hope that the integrity of your ſoul will be expreſſed in your letters. Beſides, my couſin is too virtuous and diſcreet to ſhow me any part which is not fit for my peruſal, and would not fail to ſuppreſs the correſpondence, if you were capable of abuſing it.

Farewell, my dear and worthy friend; if I thought that fortune could make you happy, I ſhould deſire you to go in purſuit of her; but

perhaps you have reaſon to deſpiſe her, being maſter of ſuch accompliſhments as will enable you to thrive without her aſſiſtance. I would rather deſire you to ſeek after happineſs, which is the fortune of the wiſe; we have ever experienced that there is no felicity without virtue; but examine carefully whether the word virtue, taken in too abſtracted a ſenſe, has not more pomp than ſolidity in it, and whether it is not a term of parade, more calculated to dazzle others, than to ſatisfy ourſelves. I ſhudder when I reflect that they who ſecretly meditated adultery ſhould dare to talk of virtue! Do you know in what ſenſe we underſtood this reſpectable epithet, which we abuſed while we were engaged in a criminal commerce? It was the impetuous paſſion with which we were mutually inflamed, that diſguiſed its tranſports under this ſacred enthuſiaſm, in order to render them more dear to us, and to hold us longer in deluſion. We were formed, I dare believe, to practiſe and cheriſh real virtue, but we were miſguided in our purſuit, and we purſued a phantom. It is time to recover from this deluſion; it is time to give up from a falſe guide which has carried us too far aſtray. My dear friend, your return to wiſdom will not be ſo difficult as you conceive. You have a guide within yourſelf, whoſe directions you have diſregarded, but never entirely rejected. Your mind is ſound, it is attached to what is right; and if juſt principles ſometimes forſake you, it is becauſe you do not uſe your utmoſt

efforts

efforts to maintain them. Examine your conſcience thoroughly, ſee whether you will not diſcover ſome neglected principle, which might have ſerved to put your actions under better regulations, to have made them more conſiſtent with each other, and with one common object. Believe me, it is not ſufficient that virtue is the baſis of your conduct, unleſs that baſis itſelf is fixed on a firm foundation. Call to your mind thoſe Indians, who imagined the world is ſupported by a great elephant, that elephant by a tortoiſe, and when you aſk them on what the tortoiſe reſts, they can anſwer you no farther.

I conjure you to regard the remonſtrances of friendſhip, and to chooſe a more certain road to happineſs than that which has ſo long miſguided us. I ſhall inceſſantly pray to heaven to grant us pure felicity, and I ſhall never be ſatisfied till we both enjoy it. And, if our hearts, in ſpite of our endeavours, recall the errours of our youth, let the reformation they produced at leaſt warrant the recollection, that we may ſay, with the ancient philoſopher—Alas! we ſhould have periſhed if we had not been undone.

Here ends the tedious ſermon I have preached to you. I ſhall have enough to do hereafter to preach to myſelf. Farewell, my amiable friend, farewell for ever! ſo inflexible duty decrees: but be aſſured that the heart of Eloiſa can never forget what was ſo dear to her———my God! what am I doing? the blotted paper will inform you. Ah! is it not excuſable to diſſolve

in tenderneſs, when we take the laſt farewell of a friend?

LETTER CXIV.

TO LORD B——.

YES, my lord, I confeſs it; the weight of life is too heavy for my ſoul. I have long endured it as a burthen; I have loſt every thing which could make it dear to me, and nothing remains but irkſomeneſs and vexation. I am told, however, that I am not at liberty to diſpoſe of my life, without the permiſſion of that Being from whom I received it. I am ſenſible likewiſe that you have a right over it by more titles than one. Your care has twice preſerved it, and your goodneſs is its conſtant ſecurity. I will never diſpoſe of it, till I am certain that I may do it without a crime, and till I have not the leaſt hope of employing it for your ſervice.

You told me that I ſhould be of uſe to you; why did you deceive me? Since we have been in London, ſo far from thinking of employing me in your concerns, you have been kind enough to make me your only concern. How ſuperfluous is your obliging ſollicitude! My lord, you know I abhor a crime, even worſe than I deteſt life. I adore the Supreme Being—I owe every thing to you; I have an affection for you; you are the only perſon on earth to whom I am attached. Friendſhip and duty may chain a wretch to this

this earth: ſophiſtry and vain pretences will never detain him. Enlighten my underſtanding, ſpeak to my heart; I am ready to hear you, but remember, that deſpair is not to be impoſed upon.

You would have me apply to the teſt of reaſon: I will; let us reaſon. You deſire me to deliberate in proportion to the importance of the queſtion in debate; I agree to it. Let us inveſtigate truth with temper and moderation, Let us diſcuſs this general propoſition with the ſame indifference we would treat any other. Robeck wrote an apology for ſuicide before he put an end to his life. I will not, after his example, write a book on the ſubject, neither am I well ſatisfied with that which he has penned, but I hope in this diſcuſſion at leaſt to imitate his moderation.

I have for a long time meditated on this aweful ſubject. You muſt be ſenſible that I have, for you know my deſtiny, and yet I am alive. The more I reflect, the more I am convinced that the queſtion may be reduced to this fundamental propoſition: Every man has a right by nature to purſue what he thinks good, and avoid what he thinks evil, in all reſpects which are not injurious to others. When our life, therefore, becomes a miſery to ourſelves, and is of advantage to no one, we are at liberty to put an end to our being. If there is any ſuch thing as a clear and ſelf-evident principle, certainly this is one, and if this be ſubverted there is ſcarce an action in life which may not be made criminal.

Let us hear what the philoſophers ſay on this ſubject. Firſt, they conſider life as ſomething which is not our own, becauſe we hold it as a gift: but becauſe it has been given to us, is it not for that reaſon our own? Has not God given theſe ſophiſts two arms? nevertheleſs, when they are under apprehenſions of a mortification, they do not ſcruple to amputate one, or both, if there be occaſion. By a parity of reaſoning, we may convince thoſe who believe in the immortality of the ſoul; for if I ſacrifice my arm to the preſervation of ſomething more precious, which is my body, I have the ſame right to ſacrifice my body to the preſervation of ſomething more valuable, which is the happineſs of my exiſtence. If all the gifts which heaven has beſtowed are naturally deſigned for our good, they are certainly too apt to change their nature; and Providence has endowed us with reaſon, that we may diſcern the difference. If this rule did not authoriſe us to chooſe the one and reject the other, to what uſe would it ſerve among mankind?

But they turn this weak objection into a thouſand ſhapes. They conſider a man living upon earth, as a ſoldier placed on duty. God, ſay they, has fixed you in this world; why do you quit your ſtation without his leave? But you, who argue thus, has he not ſtationed you in the town where you was born, why therefore do you quit it without his leave? Is not miſery, of itſelf, a ſufficient permiſſion? Whatever ſtation Providence has aſſigned me, whether it be in a regiment,

regiment, or on the earth at large, he intended me to ſtay there while I found my ſituation agreeable, and to leave it when it became intolerable. This is the voice of nature, and the voice of God. I agree that we muſt wait for an order; but when I die a natural death, God does not order me to quit life, he takes it from me: it is by rendering life inſupportable, that he orders me to quit it. In the firſt caſe, I reſiſt with all my force; in the ſecond, I have the merit of obedience.

Can you conceive that there are ſome people ſo abſurd as to arraign ſuicide as a kind of rebellion againſt Providence, by an attempt to fly from his laws? But we do not put an end to our being, in order to withdraw ourſelves from his commands, but to execute them. What! does the power of God extend no farther than to my body? Is there a ſpot in the univerſe, is there any being in the univerſe which is not ſubject to his power? and will that power have leſs immediate influence over me, when my being is refined, and thereby becomes leſs compound, and of nearer reſemblance to the divine eſſence? No, his juſtice and goodneſs are the foundation of my hopes; and if I thought that death would withdraw me from his power, I would give up my reſolution to die.

This is one of the quibbles of the Phædo, which, in other reſpects, abounds with ſublime truths. If your ſlave deſtroys himſelf, ſays Socrates to Cebes, would you not puniſh him, for

having unjuſtly deprived you of your property? Prythee, good Socrates, do we not belong to God after we are dead? The caſe you put is not applicable; you ought to argue thus: if you incumber your ſlave with a habit which confines him from diſcharging his duty properly, will you puniſh him for quitting it, in order to render you better ſervice? The grand errour lies in making life of too much importance; as if our exiſtence depended upon it, and that death was a total annihilation. Our life is of no conſequence in the ſight of God; it is of no importance in the eyes of reaſon, neither ought it to be of any in our ſight; and when we quit our body we only lay aſide an inconvenient habit. Is this circumſtance ſo painful, to be the occaſion of ſo much diſturbance? My lord, theſe declaimers are not in earneſt. Their arguments are abſurd and cruel, for they aggravate the ſuppoſed crime, as if it put a period to exiſtence, and they puniſh it, as if that exiſtence was eternal.

With reſpect to Plato's Phædo, which has furniſhed them with the only ſpecious argument that has ever been advanced, the queſtion is diſcuſſed there in a very light and deſultory manner. Socrates being condemned, by an unjuſt judgement, to loſe his life in a few hours, had no occaſion to enter into an accurate enquiry whether he was at liberty to diſpoſe of it himſelf. Suppoſing him really to have been the authour of thoſe diſcourſes which Plato aſcribes to him, yet *believe* me, my lord, he would have meditated

with

with more attention on the ſubject, had he been in circumſtances which required him to reduce his ſpeculations to practice; and a ſtrong proof that no valid objection can be drawn from that immortal work againſt the right of diſpoſing of our own lives, is, that Cato read it twice through the very night that he deſtroyed himſelf.

The ſame ſophiſters make it a queſtion whether life can ever be an evil? But when we conſider the multitude of errours, torments, and vices with which it abounds, one would rather be inclined to doubt whether it can ever be a bleſſing. Guilt inceſſantly beſieges the moſt virtuous of mankind. Every moment he lives he is in danger of falling a prey to the wicked, or of being wicked himſelf. To ſtruggle, and to endure, is his lot in this world; that of the diſhoneſt man is to do evil, and to ſuffer. In every other particular they differ, and only agree in ſharing the miſeries of life in common. If you required authorities and facts, I could cite you the oracles of old, the anſwers of the ſages, and produce inſtances where acts of virtue have been recompenſed with death. But let us leave theſe conſiderations, my lord; it is to you whom I addreſs myſelf, and I aſk you what is the chief attention of a wiſe man in this life, except, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, to collect himſelf inwardly, and endeavour, even while he lives, to be dead to every object of ſenſe? The only way by which wiſdom directs us to avoid the miſeries of human nature, is it not to detach

ourſelves

ourſelves from all earthly objects, from every thing that is groſs in our compoſition, to retire within ourſelves, and to raiſe our thoughts to ſublime contemplations? If, therefore, our misfortunes are derived from our paſſions and our errours, with what eagerneſs ſhould we wiſh for a ſtate which will deliver us both from the one and the other? What is the fate of thoſe ſons of ſenſuality, who indiſcreetly multiply their torments by their pleaſures? They in fact deſtroy their exiſtence by extending their connexions in this life; they increaſe the weight of their crimes by their numerous attachments; they reliſh no enjoyments but what are ſucceeded by a thouſand bitter wants; the more lively their ſenſibility, the more acute their ſufferings; the ſtronger they are attached to life, the more wretched they become.

But admitting it, in general, a benefit to mankind to crawl upon the earth with gloomy ſadneſs, I do not mean to intimate that the human race ought with one common conſent to deſtroy themſelves, and make the world one immenſe grave. But there are miſerable beings, who are too much exalted to be governed by vulgar opinion; to them, deſpair and grievous torments are the paſſports of nature. It would be as ridiculous to ſuppoſe that life can be a bleſſing to ſuch men, as it was abſurd in the ſophiſter Poſſidonius to deny that it was an evil, at the ſame time that he endured all the torments of the gout. While life is agreeable to us, we earneſtly

neſtly wiſh to prolong it, and nothing but a ſenſe of extreme miſery can extinguiſh the deſire of exiſtence; for we naturally conceive a violent dread of death, and this dread conceals the miſeries of human nature from our ſight. We drag a painful and melancholy life, for a long time before we can reſolve to quit it; but when once life becomes ſo inſupportable as to overcome the horrour of death, then exiſtence is evidently a great evil, and we cannot diſengage ourſelves from it too ſoon. Therefore, though we cannot exactly aſcertain the point at which it ceaſes to be a bleſſing, yet at leaſt we are certain that it is an evil long before it appears to be ſuch, and with every ſenſible man the right of quitting life is, by a great deal, precedent to the temptation.

This is not all. After they have denied that life can be an evil, in order to bar our right of making away with ourſelves; they confeſs immediately afterwards that it is an evil, by reproaching us with want of courage to ſupport it. According to them, it is cowardice to withdraw ourſelves from pain and trouble, and there are none but daſtards who deſtroy themſelves. O Rome, thou victrix of the world, what a race of cowards did thy empire produce! Let Arria, Eponina, Lucretia be of the number; they were women. But Brutus Caſſius, and thou great and divine Cato, who didſt ſhare with the Gods the adoration of an aſtoniſhed world, thou whoſe ſacred and auguſt preſence animated the Romans with holy zeal, and made tyrants tremble, little

did thy proud admirers imagine that paltry rhetoricians, immured in the dusty corner of a college, would ever attempt to prove that thou wert a coward, for having preferred death to a shameful existence.

O the dignity and energy of your modern writers! how sublime, how intrepid are you with your pens? But tell me, thou great and valiant hero, who dost so courageously decline the battle, in order to endure the pain of living somewhat longer; when a spark of fire lights upon your hand, why do you withdraw it in such haste? how! are you such a coward that you dare not bear the scorching of fire? Nothing, you say, can oblige you to endure the burning spark. And what obliges me to endure life; was the creation of a man of more difficulty to Providence than that of a straw? and is not both one and the other equally the work of his hands?

Without doubt, it is an evidence of great fortitude to bear with firmness the misery which we cannot shun; none but a fool, however, will voluntarily endure evils which he can avoid without a crime; and it is very often a great crime to suffer pain unnecessarily. He who has not resolution to deliver himself from a miserable being by a speedy death, is like one who would rather suffer a wound to mortify, than trust to the surgeon's knife for his cure. Come, thou worthy ——cut off this leg, which endangers my life. I will see it done without shrinking, and will give *that hero* leave to call me coward, who suffers his leg

leg to mortify, becauſe he dares not undergo the ſame operation.

I acknowledge that there are duties owing to others, the nature of which will not allow every man to diſpoſe of his life; but in return, how many are there which give him a right to diſpoſe of it? Let a magiſtrate on whom the welfare of a nation depends, let a father of a family who is bound to procure ſubſiſtence for his children, let a debtor who might ruin his creditors, let theſe at all events diſcharge their duty; admitting a thouſand other civil and domeſtick relations to oblige an honeſt and unfortunate man to ſupport the miſery of life, to avoid the greater evil of doing injuſtice; is it, therefore, under circumſtances totally different, incumbent on us to preſerve a life oppreſſed with a ſwarm of miſeries, when it can be of no ſervice but to him who has not courage to die? "Kill me, my child (ſays the decrepid ſavage to his ſon, who carries him on his ſhoulders, and bends under his weight) "the enemy is at hand; go to battle with thy "brethren; go and preſerve thy children, and "do not ſuffer thy helpleſs father to fall alive "into the hands of thoſe whoſe relations he "has mangled." Though hunger, ſickneſs, and poverty, thoſe domeſtick plagues, more dreadful than ſavage enemies, may allow a wretched cripple to conſume, in a ſick bed, the proviſions of a family which can ſcarce ſubſiſt itſelf, yet he who has no connexions, whom heaven has reduced to the neceſſity of living alone, whoſe wretched

wretched exiſtence can produce no good, why ſhould not he, at leaſt, have the right of quitting a ſtation where his complaints are troubleſome, and his ſufferings of no benefit?

Weigh theſe conſiderations, my lord; collect theſe arguments, and you will find that they may be reduced to the moſt ſimple of nature's rights, of which no man of ſenſe yet ever entertained a doubt. In fact, why ſhould we be allowed to cure ourſelves of the gout, and not to get rid of the miſery of life? Do not both evils proceed from the ſame hand? To what purpoſe is it to ſay, that death is painful? Are drugs agreeable to be taken? No, nature revolts againſt both. Let them prove, therefore, that it is more juſtifiable to cure a tranſient diſorder by the application of remedies, than to free ourſelves from an incurable evil by putting an end to life; and let them ſhow how it can be leſs criminal to uſe the bark for a fever, than to take opium for the ſtone. If we conſider the object in view, it is in both caſes to free ourſelves from painful ſenſations; if we regard the means, both one and the other are equally natural; if we conſider the repugnance of our nature, it operates equally on both ſides; if we attend to the will of Providence, can we ſtruggle againſt any evil of which it is not the authour? Can we deliver ourſelves from any torment which the hand of God has not inflicted? What are the bounds which limit his power, and when is reſiſtance lawful? Are we then to make *no alteration* in the condition of things, becauſe

every

every thing is in the ſtate he appointed? muſt we do nothing in this life, for fear of infringing his laws, or is it in our power to break them if we would? No, my lord, the occupation of man is more great and noble. God did not give him life that he ſhould ſupinely remain in a ſtate of conſtant inactivity. But he gave him freedom to act, conſcience to will, and reaſon to chooſe what is good. He has conſtituted him ſole judge of all his actions. He has engraved this precept in his heart—"Do whatever you conceive to be for your own good, provided you thereby do no injury to others." If my ſenſations tell me that death is eligible, I reſiſt his orders by an obſtinate reſolution to live; for, by making death deſireable, he directs me to put an end to my being.

My lord, I appeal to your wiſdom and candour; what more infallible maxims can reaſon deduce from religion, with reſpect to ſuicide? If Chriſtians have adopted contrary tenets, they are neither drawn from the principles of religion, nor from the only ſure guide, the Scriptures, but borrowed from the Pagan philoſophers. Lactantius and Auguſtine, the firſt who propagated this new doctrine, of which Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles take no notice, ground their arguments entirely on the reaſoning of the Phædo, which I have already controverted; ſo that the believers, who, in this reſpect, think they are ſupported by the authority of the Goſpel, are in fact only countenanced by the authority of Plato. In truth, where do we find throughout the whole

Bible

Bible any law againſt ſuicide, or ſo much as a bare diſapprobation of it; and is it not very unaccountable, that among the inſtances produced of perſons who devoted themſelves to death, we do not find the leaſt word of improbation againſt examples of this kind? Nay, what is more, the inſtance of Sampſon's voluntary death is authoriſed by a miracle, by which he revenges himſelf of his enemies. Would this miracle have been diſplayed to juſtify a crime; and would this man, who loſt his ſtrength, by ſuffering himſelf to be ſeduced by the allurements of a woman, have recovered it to commit an authoriſed crime, as if God himſelf would practice deceit on men?

"Thou ſhalt do no murther," ſays the decalogue. What are we to infer from this? If this commandment is to be taken literally, we muſt not deſtroy malefactors, nor our enemies: and Moſes, who put ſo many people to death, was a bad interpreter of his own precept. If there are any exceptions, certainly the firſt muſt be in favour of ſuicide, becauſe it is exempt from any degree of violence and injuſtice, the two only circumſtances which can make homicide criminal; and becauſe nature, moreover, has, in this reſpect, thrown ſufficient obſtacles in the way.

But ſtill, they tell us, we muſt patiently endure the evils which God inflicts, and make a merit of our ſufferings. This application, however, of the maxims of Chriſtianity is very ill calculated

culated to ſatisfy our judgement. Man is ſubject to a thouſand troubles, his life is a complication of evils, and he ſeems to have been born only to ſuffer. Reaſon directs him to ſhun as many of theſe evils as he can avoid; and religion, which is never in contradiction to reaſon, approves of his endeavours. But how inconſiderable is the account of theſe evils, in compariſon with thoſe he is obliged to endure againſt his will? It is with reſpect to theſe, that a merciful God allows man to claim the merit of reſiſtance; he receives the tribute he has been pleaſed to impoſe as a voluntary homage, and he places our reſignation in this life to our profit in the next. True repentance is derived from nature; if man endures patiently whatever he is obliged to ſuffer, he does, in this reſpect, all that God requires of him; and if any one is ſo inflated with pride, as to attempt more, he is a madman, who ought to be confined, or an impoſtor, who ought to be puniſhed. Let us, therefore, without ſcruple, fly from all the evils we can avoid; there will ſtill be too many left for us to endure. Let us, without remorſe, quit life itſelf when it becomes a torment to us, ſince it is in our own power to do it, and that in ſo doing we neither offend God nor man. If we would offer a ſacrifice to the Supreme Being, is it nothing to undergo death? Let us devote to God that which he demands by the voice of reaſon, and into his hands let us peaceably ſurrender our ſouls.

Such

Such are the liberal precepts which good ſenſe dictates to every man, and which religion authoriſes*. Let us apply theſe precepts to ourſelves. You have condeſcended to diſcloſe your mind to me; I am acquainted with your uneaſineſs; you do not endure leſs than myſelf; and your troubles, like mine, are incurable; and they are the more remedileſs, as the laws of honour are more immutable than thoſe of fortune. You bear them, I muſt confeſs, with fortitude. Virtue ſupports you; advance but one ſtep farther, and ſhe diſengages you. You entreat me to ſuffer; my lord, I dare importune you

*A ſtrange letter this for the diſcuſſion of ſuch a ſubject! Do men argue ſo coolly on a queſtion of this nature, when they examine it on their own accounts? Is the letter a forgery, or does the authour reaſon only with an intent to be refuted? What makes our opinion in this particular dubious, is the example of Robeck, which he cites, and which ſeems to warrant his own. Robeck deliberated ſo gravely, that he had patience to write a book, a large, voluminous, weighty, and diſpaſſionate book; and when he had concluded, according to his principles, that it was lawful to put an end to our being, he deſtroyed himſelf with the ſame compoſure that he wrote. Let us beware of the prejudices of the times, and of particular countries. When ſuicide is out of faſhion we concſude that none but madmen deſtroy themſelves; all the efforts of courage appear chimerical to daſtardly minds; every one judges of others by himſelf. Nevertheleſs, how many inſtances are there, well atteſted, of men, in every other reſpect perfectly diſcreet, who, without remorſe, rage, or deſpair, have quitted life for no other reaſon than becauſe it was a burthen to them, and have died with more compoſure than they lived.

you to put an end to your ſufferings; and I leave you to judge which of us is moſt dear to the other.

Why ſhould we delay doing that which we muſt do at laſt? Shall we wait till old age and decrepid baſeneſs attach us to life, after they have robbed it of its charms, and till we are doomed to drag an infirm and decrepid body with labour, ignominy, and pain? We are at an age when the ſoul has vigour to diſengage itſelf with eaſe from its ſhackles, and when a man knows how to die as he ought: when farther advanced in years, he ſuffers himſelf to be torn from life, which he quits with reluctance. Let us take advantage of this time, when the tedium of life makes death deſireable; and let us tremble for fear it ſhould come in all its horrours, at the moment when we could wiſh to avoid it. I remember the time, when I prayed to heaven only for a ſingle hour of life, and when I ſhould have died in deſpair if it had not been granted. Ah! what a pain it is to burſt aſunder the ties which attach our hearts to this world, and how adviſeable it is to quit life the moment the connexion is broken! I am ſenſible, my lord, that we are both worthy of a purer manſion; virtue points it out, and deſtiny invites us to ſeek it. May the friendſhip which unites us preſerve our union to the lateſt hour! O what a pleaſure for two ſincere friends voluntarily to end their days in each other's arms, to intermingle their lateſt breath, and at the ſame inſta[illegible] to give up the

the ſoul which they ſhared in common! What pain, what regret can infect their laſt moments? What do they quit by taking leave of the world? They go together; they quit nothing.

LETTER CXV.

ANSWER.

THOU art diſtracted, my friend, by a fatal paſſion; be more diſcreet; do not give council, whilſt thou ſtandeſt ſo much in need of advice. I have known greater evils than your's. I am armed with fortitude of mind: I am an Engliſhman, and not afraid to die; but I know how to live and ſuffer as becomes a man. I have ſeen death near at hand, and have viewed it with too much indifference to go in ſearch of it.

It is true, I thought you might be of uſe to me; my affection ſtood in need of your's: your endeavours might have been ſerviceable to me; your underſtanding might have enlightened me in the moſt important concern of my life: if I do not avail myſelf of it, who are you to impute it to? Where is it? What is become of it? What are you capable of? Of what uſe can you be in your preſent condition? What ſervice can I expect from you? A ſenſeleſs grief renders you ſtupid and unconcerned. Thou art no man; thou art nothing; and if I did not conſider what thou mighteſt be, I cannot conceive any thing more abject.

There is need of no other proof than your *letter itſelf.* Formerly I could diſcover in you good

good ſenſe and truth. Your ſentiments were juſt, your reflexions proper, and I liked you not only from judgement but choice; for I conſidered your influence as an additional motive to excite me to the ſtudy of wiſdom. But what do I perceive now in the arguments of your letter, with which you appear to be ſo highly ſatisfied? A wretched and perpetual ſophiſtry, which in the erroneous deviations of your reaſon ſhows the diſorder of your mind; and which I would not ſtoop to refute, if I did not commiſerate your delirium.

To ſubvert all your reaſoning with one word, I would only aſk you a ſingle queſtion. You who believe in the exiſtence of a God, in the immortality of the ſoul, and in the free-will of man, you ſurely cannot ſuppoſe that an intelligent being is embodied, and ſtationed on the earth by accident only, to exiſt, to ſuffer, and to die. It is certainly moſt probable that the life of man is not without ſome deſign, ſome end, ſome moral object. I entreat you to give me a direct anſwer to this point; after which we will deliberately examine your letter, and you will bluſh to have written it.

But let us wave all general maxims, about which we often hold violent diſputes, without adopting any of them in practice; for in their application we always find ſome particular circumſtances, which makes ſuch an alteration in the ſtate of things, that every one thinks himſelf diſpenſed from ſubmitting to the rules

which he prescribes to others; and it is well known, that every man who establishes general principles deems them obligatory on all the world, himself excepted. Once more let us speak to you in particular.

You believe that you have a right to put an end to your being. Your proof is of a very singular nature; "because I am disposed to die, say you, I have a right to destroy myself." This is certainly a very convenient argument for villains of all kinds: they ought to be very thankful to you for the arms with which you have furnished them: there can be no crimes, which, according to your arguments, may not be justified by the temptation to perpetrate them, and as soon as the impetuosity of passion shall prevail over the horrour of guilt, their disposition to do evil will be considered as a right to commit it.

Is it lawful for you, therefore, to quit life? I should be glad to know whether you have yet begun to live? What! was you placed here on earth to do nothing in this world? Did not heaven when it gave you existence give you some task or employment? If you have accomplished your day's work before evening rest yourself for the remainder of the day; you have a right to do it; but let us see your work. What answer are you prepared to make the Supreme Judge, when he demands an account of your time? Tell me, what can you say to him?—— I have seduced a virtuous girl; I have forsaken

a friend in his diſtreſs. Thou unhappy wretch! point out to me that juſt man who can boaſt that he has lived long enough; let me learn from him in what manner I ought to have ſpent my days, to be at liberty to quit life.

You enumerate the evils of human nature. You are not aſhamed to exhauſt common-place topicks, which have been hackneyed over a hundred times; and you conclude that life is an evil. But ſearch, examine into the order of things, and ſee whether you can find any good which is not intermingled with evil. Does it, therefore, follow that there is no good in the univerſe, and can you confound what is in its own nature evil, with that which is only an evil accidentally? You have confeſſed yourſelf, that the tranſitory and paſſive life of man is of no conſequence, and only bears reſpect to matter from which he will ſoon be diſencumbered; but his active and moral life, which ought to have moſt influence over his nature, conſiſts in the exerciſe of free-will. Life is an evil to a wicked man in proſperity, and a bleſſing to an honeſt man in diſtreſs: for it is not its caſual modification, but its relation to ſome final object, which makes it either good or bad. After all, what are theſe cruel torments which force you to abandon life? Do you imagine, that under your affected impartiality in the enumeration of the evils of this life I did not diſcover that you was aſhamed to ſpeak of your own? Truſt me, and do not at once abandon every virtue.

Preſerve at leaſt your wonted ſincerity, and ſpeak thus openly to your friend: "I have loſt all hope of ſeducing a modeſt woman, I am obliged, therefore, to be a man of virtue; I had much rather die."

You are weary of living; and you tell me that life is an evil. Sooner or later you will receive conſolation, and then you will ſay life is a bleſſing. You will ſpeak with more truth, though not with better reaſon; for nothing will have altered but yourſelf. Begin the alteration then from this day; and ſince all the evil you lament is in the diſpoſition of your own mind, correct your irregular appetites, and do not ſet your houſe on fire to avoid the trouble of putting it in order.

I endure miſery, ſay you: is it in my power to avoid ſuffering? But this is changing the ſtate of the queſtion: for the ſubject of enquiry is, not whether you ſuffer, but whether your life is an evil? Let us proceed. You are wretched, you naturally endeavour to extricate yourſelf from miſery. Let us ſee whether, for that purpoſe, it is neceſſary to die.

Let us for a moment examine the natural tendency of the afflictions of the mind, as in direct oppoſition to the evils of the body, the two ſubſtances being of contrary natures. The latter become worſe and more inveterate the longer they continue, and at length utterly deſtroy this mortal machine. The former, on the contrary, being only external and tranſitory mo-

difications of an immortal and uncompounded eſſence, are inſenſibly effaced, and leave the mind in its original form, which is not ſuſceptible of alteration. Grief, diſquietude, regret, and deſpair are evils of ſhort duration, which never take root in the mind; and experience always falſifies that bitter reflexion, which makes us imagine our miſery will have no end. I will go farther; I cannot imagine that the vices which contaminate us are more inherent in our nature than the troubles we endure; I not only believe that they periſh with the body which gives them birth, but I think, beyond all doubt, that a longer life would be ſufficient to reform mankind, and that many ages of youth would teach us that nothing is preferable to virtue.

However this may be, as the greateſt part of our phyſical evils are inceſſantly increaſing, the acute pains of the body, when they are incurable, may juſtify a man's deſtroying himſelf; for all his faculties being diſtracted with pain, and the evil being without remedy, he has no longer any uſe either of his will or of his reaſon; he ceaſes to be a man before he is dead, and does nothing more in taking away his life than quit a body which encumbers him, and in which his ſoul is no longer reſident.

But it is otherwiſe with the afflictions of the mind, which, let them be ever ſo acute, always carry their remedy with them. In fact, what is it that makes any evil intolerable? Nothing but

but its duration. The operations of ſurgery are generally much more painful than the diſorders they cure; but the pain occaſioned by the latter is laſting, that of the operation is momentary, and therefore preferable. What occaſion is there, therefore, for any operation to remove troubles which die of courſe by their duration, the only circumſtance which could render them inſupportable Is it reaſonable to apply ſuch deſperate remedies to evils which expire of themſelves? To a man who values himſelf on his fortitude, and who eſtimates years at their real value, of two ways by which he may extricate himſelf from the ſame troubles, which will appear preferable, death or time? Have patience and you will be cured. What would you deſire more?

Oh! you will ſay, it doubles my afflictions to reflect that they will ceaſe at laſt! This is the vain ſophiſtry of grief! an apophthegm void of reaſon, of propriety, and perhaps of ſincerity. What an abſurd motive of deſpair is the hope of terminating miſery*! Even allowing this fantaſtical reflexion, who would not chooſe to increaſe the preſent pain for a moment, under the aſſurance of putting an end to it, as we ſcarify a wound, in order to heal it? and admitting

* No, my lord, we do not put an end to miſery by theſe means, but rather fill the meaſure of affliction, by burſting aſunder the laſt ties which attach us to felicity. When we regret what was dear to us, grief itſelf ſtill attaches us to the object we lament, which is a ſtate leſs deplorable *than to be* attached to nothing.

admitting any charm in grief, to make us in love with ſuffering, when we releaſe ourſelves from it by putting an end to our being, do we not at that inſtant incur all that we apprehend hereafter?

Reflect thoroughly, young man; what are ten, twenty, thirty years, in competition with immortality? Pain and pleaſure paſs like a ſhadow; life ſlides away in an inſtant; it is nothing of itſelf; its value depends on the uſe we make of it. The good that we have done is all that remains, and it is that alone which marks its importance.

Therefore, do not ſay any more that your exiſtence is an evil, ſince it depends upon yourſelf to make it a bleſſing; and if it be an evil to have lived, this is an additional reaſon for prolonging life. Do not pretend neither to ſay any more that you are at liberty to die; for it is as much as to ſay that you have power to alter your nature, that you have a right to revolt againſt the Authour of your being, and to fruſtrate the end of your exiſtence. But when you add, that your death does injury to no one, do you recollect that you make this declaration to your friend?

Your death does injury to no one. I underſtand you! You think the loſs I ſhall ſuſtain by your death of no importance; you deem my affliction of no conſequence. I will urge to you no more the rights of friendſhip, which you deſpiſe; but are there no obligations ſtill more

dear*, which ought to induce you to preſerve your life? If there be a perſon in the world who loved you to that degree as to be unwilling to ſurvive you, and whoſe happineſs depends on your's, do you think that you have no obligations to her? Will not the execution of your wicked deſign diſturb the peace of a mind, which has been, with ſuch difficulty, reſtored to its former innocence? Are not you afraid to add freſh torments to a heart of ſuch ſenſibility? Are not you apprehenſive leſt your death ſhould be attended with a loſs more fatal, which would deprive the world and virtue itſelf of its brighteſt ornament? And if ſhe ſhould ſurvive you, are not you afraid to rouſe up remorſe in her boſom, which is more grievous to ſupport than life itſelf? Thou ungrateful friend! thou indelicate lover! wilt thou always be taken up wholly with thyſelf? Wilt thou always think on thy own troubles alone? Haſt thou no regard for the happineſs of one who was ſo dear to thee? and cannot thou reſolve to live for her who was willing to die with thee?

You talk of the duties of a magiſtrate, and of a father of a family; and becauſe you are not under thoſe circumſtances you think yourſelf abſolutely free. And are you then under no obligations to ſociety, to whom you are indebted for your preſervation, your talents, your underſtanding?

* Obligations more dear than thoſe of friendſhip! Is it a philoſopher who talks thus! But this affected ſophiſt was of an amorous diſpoſition.

ſtanding? Do you owe nothing to your native country, and to thoſe unhappy people who may need your aſſiſtance? O what an accurate calculation you make! among the obligations you have enumerated you have only omitted thoſe of a man and of a citizen. Where is the virtuous patriot, who refuſed to inliſt under a foreign prince, becauſe his blood ought not to be ſpilt but in the ſervice of his country; and who now, in a fit of deſpair, is ready to ſhed it againſt the expreſs prohibition of the laws? The laws, the laws, young man! did any wiſe man ever deſpiſe them? Socrates, though innocent, out of regard to them refuſed to quit his priſon. You do not ſcruple to violate them by quitting life unjuſtly; and you aſk, what injury do I?

You endeavour to juſtify yourſelf by example. You preſume to mention the Romans: you talk of the Romans! it becomes you, indeed, to cite thoſe illuſtrious names. Tell me, did Brutus die a lover in deſpair, and did Cato plunge the dagger in his breaſt for his miſtreſs? Thou weak and abject man! what reſemblance is there between Cato and thee? Show me the common ſtandard between that ſublime ſoul and thine. Ah! vain wretch! hold thy peace: I am afraid to profane his name by a vindication of his conduct. At that auguſt and ſacred name every friend to virtue ſhould bow to the ground, and honour the memory of the greateſt hero in ſilence.

How ill you have ſelected your examples, and how meanly you judge of the Romans, if you imagine

imagine that they thought themſelves at liberty to quit life ſo ſoon as it became a burthen to them. Recur to the excellent days of that republick, and ſee whether you will find a ſingle citizen of virtue, who thus freed himſelf from the diſcharge of his duty even after the moſt cruel misfortunes. When Regulus was on his return to Carthage, did he prevent the torments which he knew were preparing for him by deſtroying himſelf? What would not Poſthumus have given, when obliged to paſs under the yoke at Claudium, had this reſource been juſtifiable? How much did even the ſenate admire that effort of courage, which enabled the conſul Varo to ſurvive his defeat? For what reaſon did ſo many generals voluntarily ſurrender themſelves to their enemies, they to whom ignominy was ſo dreadful, and who were ſo little afraid of dying? It was becauſe they conſidered their blood, their life, and their lateſt breath, as devoted to their country; and neither ſhame nor misfortune could diſſuade them from this ſacred duty. But when the laws were ſubverted, and the ſtate became a prey to tyranny, the citizens reſumed their natural liberty, and the right they had over their own lives. When Rome was no more, it was lawful for the Romans to give up their lives; they had diſcharged their duties on earth, they had no longer any country to defend, they were therefore at liberty to diſpoſe of their lives, and to obtain that freedom for themſelves which they could not recover for their

their country. After having ſpent their days in the ſervice of expiring Rome, and in fighting for the defenſe of its laws, they died great and virtuous, as they had lived, and their death was an additional tribute to the glory of the Roman name, ſince none of them beheld a ſight above all others moſt diſhonourable, that of a true citizen ſtooping to an uſurper.

But thou, what art thou? What haſt thou done? Doſt thou think to excuſe thyſelf on account of thy obſcurity? Does thy weakneſs exempt thee from thy duty, and becauſe thou haſt neither rank nor diſtinction in thy country, art thou leſs ſubject to the laws? It becomes you vaſtly to preſume to talk of dying, while you owe the ſervice of your life to your equals. Know, that a death, ſuch as you meditate, is ſhameful and ſurreptitious. It is a theft committed on mankind in general. Before you quit life, return the benefits you have received from every individual. But, you ſay, I have no attachments; I am uſeleſs in the world. O thou young philoſopher! art thou ignorant that thou canſt not move a ſingle ſtep without finding ſome duty to fulfil; and that every man is uſeful to ſociety, even by means of his exiſtence alone?

Hear me, thou raſh young man! thou art dear to me. I commiſerate thy errors. If the leaſt ſenſe of virtue ſtill remains in thy breaſt, attend, and let me teach thee to be reconciled to life. Whenever thou art tempted to quit it, ſay to thyſelf——"Let me at leaſt do one good

"action before I die." Then go in ſearch for one in a ſtate of indigence, whom thou mayeſt relieve; for one under misfortunes, whom thou mayeſt comfort; for one under oppreſſion, whom thou mayeſt defend. Introduce to me thoſe unhappy wretches whom my rank keeps at a diſtance. Do not be afraid of miſuſing my purſe, or my credit: make free with them; diſtribute my fortune; make me rich. If this conſideration reſtrains you to-day, it will reſtrain you to-morrow; if to-morrow, it will reſtrain you all your life. If it has no power to reſtrain you, die! you are below my care.

LETTER CXVI.

FROM LORD B——.

I Cannot, my dear friend, embrace you to-day, as I was in hopes I ſhould, being detained two days longer at Kenſington. It is the way of the court to be very buſy in doing nothing, and all affairs run in a conſtant ſucceſſion without being deſpatched. The buſineſs which has confined me here eight days might have been concluded in two hours; but as the chief concern of the miniſtry is to preſerve an air of buſineſs, they waſte more time in putting me off than it would coſt them to deſpatch me. My impatience, which is rather too evident, does not contribute to ſhorten the delay. You know that the court is not ſuited to my turn; I find

it

it more intolerable ſince we have lived together, and I had rather a hundred times ſhare your melancholy, than be peſtered with the knaves which abound in this country.

Nevertheleſs, in converſing with theſe buſy ſluggards, a thought ſtruck me with regard to you, and I only wait your conſent to diſpoſe of you to advantage. I perceive that in ſtruggling with your affliction, you ſuffer both from your uneaſineſs of mind, and from your reſiſtance. If you are determined to live and overcome it, you have formed this reſolution leſs in conformity to the dictates of reaſon and honour than in compliance with your friends. But this is not enough; you muſt recover the reliſh of life to diſcharge its duties as you ought; for with ſo much indifference about every thing, you will ſucceed in nothing. We may both of us talk as we will, but reaſon alone will never reſtore you to your reaſon. It is neceſſary that a multiplicity of new and ſtriking objects ſhould in ſome meaſure withdraw you from that attention which your mind fixes ſolely on one object of its affections. To recover yourſelf, you muſt be detached from inward reflexion, and nothing but the agitation of a buſy life can reſtore you to ſerenity.

An opportunity offers for this purpoſe, which is not to be diſregarded; a great and noble enterpriſe is on foot, and ſuch a one as has not been equalled for ages. It depends on you to be a ſpectator and aſſiſtant in it. You will ſee the

grandeſt ſight which the eye of man ever beheld, and your turn for obſervation will be abundantly gratified. Your appointment will be honourable, and with the talents you are maſter of, will only require courage and good health. You will find it attended with more danger than confinement, which will make it more agreeable to you; and, in few words, your engagement will not be for any long time. I cannot give you further information at preſent; becauſe this ſcheme, which is almoſt ripe for diſcovery, is nevertheleſs a ſecret, with which I am not acquainted in all its particulars. I will only add, that if you decline this lucky and extraordinary opportunity, you will, probably, never recover it again, and will regret it as long as you live.

I have ordered my ſervant, who is the bearer of this letter, to find you out wherever you are, and not to return without a line; for the affair requires deſpatch, and I muſt give an anſwer before I leave this place.

LETTER CXVII.

ANSWER.

DO, my lord, diſpoſe of me; I will agree to whatever you propoſe. Till I am worthy to ſerve you, at leaſt I claim the merit of obeying you.

LETTER

LETTER CXVIII.

FROM LORD B——.

SINCE you approve of the thought I ſuggeſted, I will not delay a minute to acquaint you that every thing is concluded, and to explain to you the nature of the engagement I have entered into, in purſuance of the authority you gave me to make the agreement on your behalf.

You know that a ſquadron of five men of war is equipped at Plymouth, and that they are ready to ſet ſail. The commodore is Mr. George Anſon, a brave and experienced officer, and an old friend of mine. It is deſtined for the South-Sea, whither it is to ſail through the Straits of Le Maire, and to come back by the Eaſt-Indies. You ſee, therefore, that the object is no leſs than to make the tour of the world, an expedition which, it is imagined, will take up three years. I could have entered you as a voluntier; but to give you more importance among the crew, I have obtained the addition of a title for you, and you ſtand on the liſt in the capacity of engineer of the land forces: this will be more ſuitable to you, becauſe, having followed the bent of your genius from your firſt outſet in the world, I know you made it your early ſtudy.

I propoſe to return to London to-morrow*, to

* I do not rightly underſtand this: Kenſington not being above a mile and a half from London, the noblemen who go to court do not lie there, yet Lord B—— tells us he was obliged to ſtay there I know not how many days.

to preſent you to Mr. Anſon within two days. In the mean time, take care to get your equipage ready, and provide yourſelf with books and inſtruments; for the embarkation is ready, and only waits for ſailing orders. My dear friend, I hope that God will bring you back from this long voyage in full health of mind and body, and that at your return we ſhall meet never to part again.

LETTER CXIX.

TO MRS. ORBE.

MY dear and lovely couſin, I am preparing to make the tour of the world; I am going into another hemiſphere, in purſuit of that peace which I could not enjoy in this. Fool that I am! I am going to wander over the univerſe, without being able to find one place where my heart can reſt. I am going to find a retreat from the world, where I may be at a diſtance from you. But it becomes me to regard the will of a friend, a benefactor, a father. Without the ſmalleſt hopes of a cure, at leaſt I will take pains for it; Eloiſa and virtue require the ſacrifice. In three hours time I ſhall be at the mercy of the winds: in three days I ſhall loſe ſight of Europe; in three months I ſhall be in unknown ſeas, raging with perpetual tempeſts; in three years perhaps ..... How dreadful is the thought of never ſeeing you more!

more! Alas! the greateſt danger is in my own breaſt; for, whatever may be my fate, I am reſolved, I ſwear, that you ſhall ſee me worthy to appear in your ſight, or you ſhall never behold me more.

Lord B——, who is on his return to Rome, will deliver this letter in his way, and acquaint you with all particulars concerning me. You are acquainted with his diſpoſition, and you will eaſily gueſs at thoſe circumſtances which he does not chooſe to communicate. You was once no ſtranger to mine; therefore, you may likewiſe form ſome judgement of thoſe things which I do not care to relate myſelf.

Your friend, I hear, has the happineſs to be a mother as well as yourſelf. Ought ſhe then to be .... O inexorable heaven! .... O *my* mother! why did heaven in its wrath grant you a ſon? ....

I muſt conclude: I feel that I muſt. Farewell, ye pure and celeſtial ſouls! farewell, ye tender and inſeparable friends, the beſt women on earth! Each of you is the only object worthy of the other's affections. May you mutually contribute to each other's happineſs! Deign now and then to call to mind the memory of an unfortunate wretch, who only exiſted to ſhare with you every ſentiment of his ſoul, and who ceaſed to live the moment he was divided from you. If ever——.... I hear the ſignal, and the ſhouts of the ſailors. The wind blows ſtrong, and the ſails are ſpread. I mu

on board: I muſt be gone. Thou vaſt and tumultuous ſea, which, perhaps, will bury me beneath thy waves! oh! that upon thy ſwelling surge I could recover that calm which has forſaken my troubled ſoul!

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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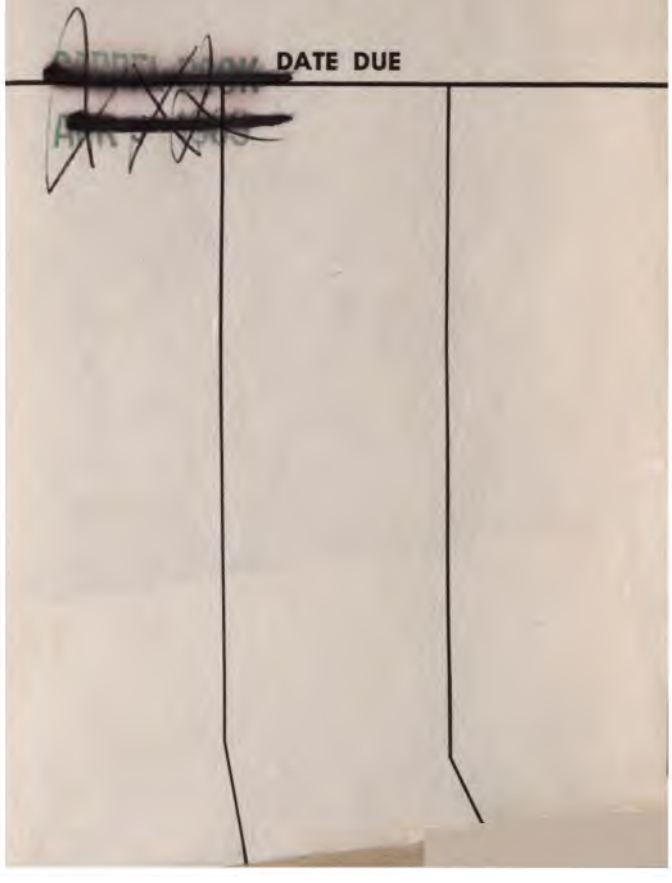

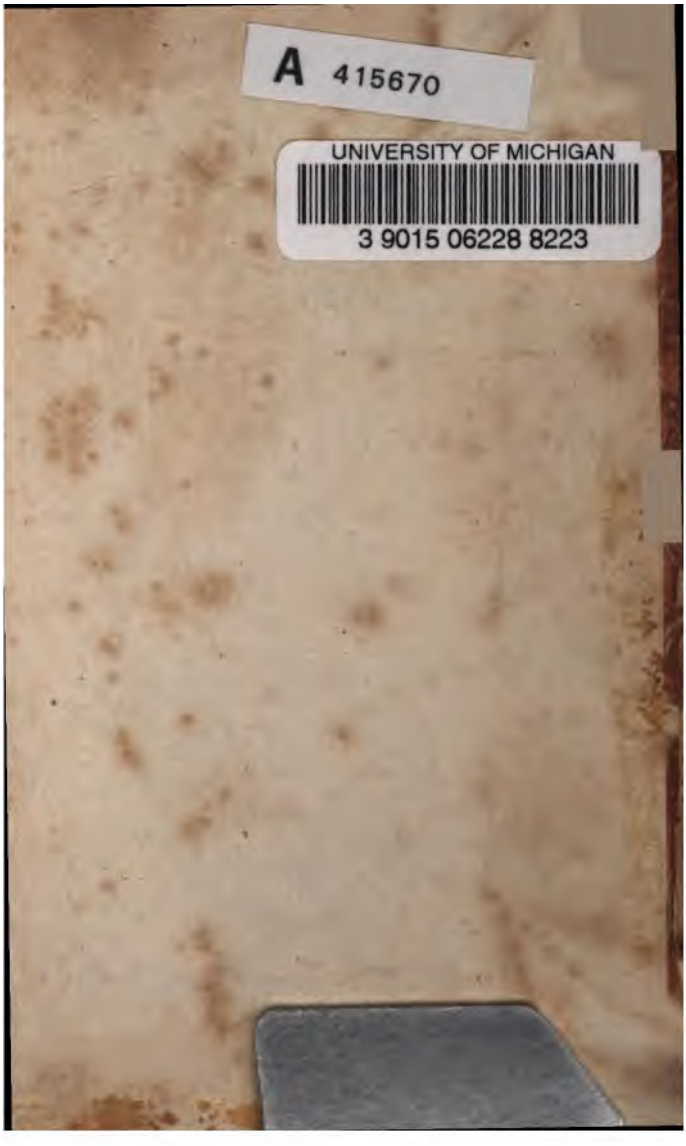
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